The BOY SCOUTS with the RED CROSS

SCOUT MASTER ROBERT SHALER

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THE BOY SCOUTS
WITH
THE RED CROSS

BY

SCOUT MASTER ROBERT SHALER

AUTHOR OF "BOY SCOUTS OF THE SIGNAL CORPS," "BOY SCOUTS OF PIONEER CAMP," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE LIFE SAVING CREW," "BOY SCOUTS ON PICKET DUTY," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE FLYING SQUADRON," "BOY SCOUTS AND THE PRIZE PENNANT," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE NAVAL RESERVE," "BOY SCOUTS IN THE SADDLE," "BOY SCOUTS FOR CITY IMPROVEMENT," "BOY SCOUTS IN THE GREAT FLOOD," "BOY SCOUTS OF THE FIELD HOSPITAL," "BOY SCOUTS AS COUNTY FAIR GUIDES," "BOY SCOUTS AS FOREST FIRE FIGHTERS," ETC.

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The Boy Scouts with the Red Cross.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN THE AMBULANCE CAME.

"It's going to be all right now, fellows!"

"Well, for one I'm glad to be relieved from these onerous duties, as sure as my name's Billy Worth!"

"Listen to Billy talk, just as if the whole burden had been resting on *his* shoulders, when everybody knows Arthur Cameron and our efficient scout master, Hugh Hardin, have done about all the tough work!"

"That's right, Alec, but it's made me tired watching them hurrying from one patient to another. Then again, mebbe it's partly because I'm not used to being in a field hospital anyway, and my nerves are getting shaky under the terrific strain."

"Have it as you will, boys, but just the same every one of us is happy to see that Red Cross ambulance coming down the road from Farmingdale."

"Let's give them three cheers, Hugh!"

Six well-battered campaign hats, such as Boy Scouts almost invariably delight in wearing, were waved energetically in the air, and as many pairs of lusty young lungs roared out a salvo of welcome.

It was a most remarkable scene which that half-dozen wearers of the honored khaki looked upon at the time those cheers rang out. For the special benefit of those readers who may not have enjoyed reading the preceding books of this series, a little explanation may not come in amiss while the boys are awaiting the arrival of the oncoming ambulance.*

These boys belonged in the New England town of Oakvale, and most of them were members of the Wolf Patrol of the local troop. They had started out in the early summer for a camping trip, having also members of other patrols with them—the Hawk, the Otter, the

* See "The Boy Scouts of the Field Hospital."

Fox and the Owl—numbering some fourteen in all.

Pitching their tents on the bank of the roaring Hurricane, in a section of country where they had never been before, they proceeded to enjoy themselves after the fashion of scouts —every one according to his own pleasure—although at the same time a certain amount of authority was exercised by the acting scout master.

A variety of adventures fell to their lot which have been faithfully recorded in the pages of the preceding volume; they should prove interesting reading to all lads with red blood in their veins.

It developed that they had camped within a couple of miles of a large plant or cement works where a couple of hundred men, mostly foreigners, had been employed.

On account of dull times the owner of the works had thought fit to reduce the wages of his employees, and in consequence there had been a strike.

As so frequently happens in such cases where feeling runs high, the owner of the plant, upon finding that his old men would not

return to work, hired guards to protect the buildings, while he imported a new lot of strike-breakers whose presence excited the foreigners and promised trouble.

The boys in camp had learned something about this, and Hugh Hardin was seen to listen many times when certain sounds came on the wind blowing from the quarter where he knew the plant was located.

Finally, one morning shortly after breakfast they had heard the sound of numerous gunshots, and much loud shouting. This told them what they had been fearing must have happened, and that a terrible battle between the strikers and the guards had come to pass.

Scouts above all things are always looking about for opportunities to make themselves useful to their fellow beings; and it now occurred to Hugh Hardin that they would never forgive themselves if they did not proceed to render "first aid to the injured" to any of the wretched foreigners who may have been shot during the riot that had taken place.

Accordingly, after consulting with his chums, the scout master selected five of whom he wished to accompany him on his errand of

mercy. Of course, in picking these members of Oakvale troop, Hugh considered their availability along the line of knowledge of surgery in its first principles as well as their ability to handle a stretcher in case such should be needed.

So they had hastened across country and arrived on the scene to find that their worst fears were realized. Several badly wounded men had already been helped back to the settlement where these foreigners lived in shacks and even tents. Others, to an unknown number, were said to be lying on the ground where they had fallen at the time they tried to rush the guards, who shot them down by a murderous fire.

Besides Hugh Hardin and his stout, good-natured chum, Billy Worth, there were present Arthur Cameron, said to be the best hand at surgery in the troop, Alec Sands, Bud Morgan and Ralph Kenyon.

They had managed with the aid of a rude stretcher made from a mattress tick obtained from the padrone of the foreign settlement to carry the last of the badly wounded strikers to the temporary field hospital which had been

started under a tree. There were a couple of women patients as well, for in that rush toward the gates of the stockade surrounding the cement works, the women had urged on their husbands, just as the Amazons outvied all others during the Revolution in Paris long ago.

Here the six boys had labored, and tried to do all they could to relieve the suffering of those wretched victims of the riot, some of whom were injured so badly that Hugh and Arthur feared for their lives.

Wisely foreseeing that they had a greater task cut out for them than it would appear lay within the province of Boy Scouts, with their limited knowledge of surgery, Hugh from the beginning had determined to seek assistance.

It happened that just then the Red Cross movement in the State was receiving an impetus, and those deeply interested in the advance of the cause of mercy were holding some sort of a convention in the city of Farmingdale, not a great many miles away from the pitiful little field hospital which Hugh and his mates had organized under such discouraging conditions.

Hugh understood that at this convention there was to be shown one of the very newest motor ambulances, together with its regular traveling doctor and two nurses of the Red Cross.

It was feared that those in charge of the works might delay sending off an account of the battle, and hence help would be slow in coming. Accordingly, Hugh Hardin, with his accustomed zeal, had conceived the idea of telegraphing direct to the Red Cross at Farmingdale. He had explained in brief language what a terrible condition of affairs prevailed, and begged that they dispatch their new motor ambulance forthwith, in order to save the lives of several whose cases were beyond the limited capabilities of the scouts.

As the boys, though never slackening their arduous duties, had been watching eagerly for much more than an hour after this urgent message had been dispatched, it can easily be understood why they should hail the appearance of that oncoming ambulance with hearty cheers.

"There, you can see the surgeon all in white sitting beside the chauffeur!" exclaimed Alec

Sands, as they gathered in a cluster and anxiously awaited the coming of those who would relieve them from the weight of care pressing so heavily on their young shoulders.

"Yes, and I c'n also see two nurses, also in snowy garments, peeping out back of the surgeon," added Billy Worth.

The foreigners were wildly excited. Of course most of them had never before set eyes on a Red Cross ambulance, and they hardly knew whether they should allow the strangers to take their wounded away, or to resist them. They rushed this way and that, all the while talking at a furious rate, until as Ralph Kenyon, who had always been a lover of the woods, declared it reminded him of a crow caucus, where a thousand birds cawed and scolded and clamored.

The ambulance drew up close to where the six scouts stood, as though the one at the wheel recognized them as being in authority; or it may be the surgeon saw the significant signs of a field hospital in the figures scattered on dirty blankets under the shade of that wide-spreading oak.

"Which one of you sent that message,

boys?" asked the surgeon, a young energetic man, who looked as though he knew his business; and as the other five scouts immediately turned their eyes toward Hugh, he understood, so he went on to say: "From another source news came in that many were seriously injured, and a few killed outright. Is that a fact?"

"So far as we have been able to find out, sir, there were no actual fatalities," Hugh told him, "though several are badly hurt, having been shot in the back!"

"What's that you say—shot in the back?" demanded the surgeon quickly. "That is a significant admission which may have considerable bearing on the finding of a coroner's jury in case death results. But show me what you have been doing in this emergency, my boys."

"We had hardly any facilities worth mentioning, you understand, sir," remarked Arthur Cameron, "and a number of the patients had to be carried from the place where they were hurt to this amateur field hospital. We made a stretcher, you see, for that purpose."

"And well done at that. I'll be bound it an-

swered the purpose as well as the up-to-date one connected with the ambulance!" cried the astonished Red Cross surgeon.

He went from one patient to another and examined the work of the scouts. Loud was his praise for the cleverness shown by Arthur Cameron. While doubtless in many things it was far from the finished product of a graduated surgeon, at the same time there was much about it to cause the surgeon to commend the boys.

"I want to tell you, my boy," he said directly to the blushing Arthur, when Hugh informed him that most of the work had been done by that modest member of the scout troop, "you'll make the mistake of your life if you fail to continue along this road, for you have it in you to accomplish wonders. Take my advice, and think very seriously before you commit the blunder of putting a square man in a round hole."

Of course, that was very pleasant talk for Arthur, and his chums seemed to take quite as much delight in hearing him praised as though they themselves came within the scope of the surgeon's flattery.

They watched how deftly he worked when examining the wounds that had been already treated, turning most of the ordinary cases over to the two nurses. Hugh learned, as he chatted with the other, that the young surgeon's name was Doctor Richter, and the attendants of the ambulance were Nurse Arnold and Nurse Jones.

The former was a middle-aged woman who had doubtless had much experience in her line; but Nurse Jones, Hugh found, was rather young and with rosy cheeks, as well as bright eyes. As a rule the scout master paid very little attention to the looks of girls, but somehow, in this case, he found himself more or less interested in the two women whose sleeves bore the magic insignia of the Red Cross.

When presently they came to one of the poor fellows who had received so serious a wound, the boys waited with more or less concern while the surgeon made his examination. Hugh could see that he looked grave, and this fact convinced him of the seriousness of the case. It also told the scout master that he had acted wisely in wiring to the Red Cross

to send help, so as to relieve the inexperienced scouts from further responsibility.

"He is in a bad way," remarked Dr. Richter, as he bent back toward Hugh. "It would be little short of downright murder to carry him back over those rough roads, even in our splendid ambulance. I'm afraid we'll have to make an emergency hospital out of it here if, as you say, there are several more cases like this. Those who can stand the trip may be taken away, with one of the nurses in charge; the other I will keep by me for the present."

So they went from one to another, and Dr. Richter was pleased to continue saying how delighted he felt over the fact that boys could make themselves so useful in case of need like that which had arisen.

"It does you great credit in the first place, let me tell you, Mr. Scout Master," he said, "that you and your chums decided to hurry over here on the run to lend a helping hand. I never fully understood what the Boy Scout movement stood for up to now; but after seeing what you have done, from this time on it is going to have my unqualified approval. Wherever I can, I shall tell just how I was

converted to standing up for such a noble purpose in life."

"There's another cloud of dust up the road yonder, Hugh," said Alec at this interesting juncture. "We're all wondering whether a second ambulance corps could have been sent out from some other town to render aid. If it happens that way they might as well turn around and go back home; for first come first served, you know, and we've turned everything over to the Red Cross."

"I can see a couple of big touring cars," ventured Billy Worth, "and say, they seem to be full of men at that. If they're all doctors and nurses we'll be fairly swamped with workers."

"That man in the leading car seems to have some sort of a silver badge pinned on his breast," remarked Alec. "I tell you what it means, boys; p'raps he's the big officer of the county, the sheriff; and that's a posse he's sworn in to accompany him here to keep the peace!"

"Alec, you've hit it square on the head that time," added Ralph Kenyon, excitedly. "That's just what those men are—a sheriff's posse!"

CHAPTER II.

AN EMERGENCY HOSPITAL.

"Listen!" said Bud Morgan, "I just heard the padrone here, who is in charge of these foreigners, say that man with the gray mustache is Mr. Campertown, who owns the cement works. They're not feeling very kindly toward him, and perhaps it's as well that he comes here protected by a sheriff's armed posse."

"But what d'ye think they mean to do?" asked Billy Worth.

"Take charge of the situation," replied Hugh, promptly. "It may be the governor has been appealed to by some one, and has given the sheriff authority to order the guards out of the barricade. He may even be meaning to arrest them on some charge or other."

The two big touring cars stopped close by, and the man who seemed to be in authority strode up to the spot where the scouts, as well as Dr. Richter, stood. He gave a glance

toward the emergency hospital under the oak, and his look was grave as he addressed the surgeon.

"Where do you come from, Doctor?" he asked, noticing, of course, the fact that the ambulance was marked with that significant Red Cross that told its story better than mere words could have done.

"From Farmingdale," replied the Red Cross surgeon, "where a convention was in progress when we received a wire sent by these fine boys here, begging us to come and relieve them from the duty of taking care of the many who were injured in the riot that resembled a massacre."

The gruff-looking sheriff raised his bushy eyebrows and surveyed Hugh and his comrades with sudden interest.

"You don't mean to tell me these kids were handling such cases when you came on the scene?" he demanded, with an incredulous stare.

"Certainly—and nobly," the other assured him. "Not only have they taken the first necessary steps to stop the loss of life blood, but they have made that very good stretcher,

and carried several of the badly injured from the front of the plant over here under the shade of this tree. The lads are deserving of the greatest praise."

"I am certainly surprised, and pleased as well," said the sheriff, nodding in the direction of the boys. "Were there any fatalities, doctor?"

"I understand none up to the present," replied the surgeon. "We have, however, several cases so serious that I would not like to predict a favorable outcome, though everything possible will be done to pull them through. They were shot *in the back!*"

It seemed to Hugh that when Dr. Richter made this last startling remark he looked straight at the man with the white mustache, who, still sitting in one of the automobiles, had been listening earnestly.

"What's that you say, Doctor; shot *in the back?* That's bad!" was what the sheriff exclaimed. Hugh, watching Mr. Campertown, saw that he had turned pale and moved uneasily.

Just then Hugh noticed there was a handsome little chap of about three years of age

close beside the rich owner of the plant; he imagined that it might possibly be a grandchild, for Mr. Campertown seemed to be a man of at least fifty. How it happened that he had brought the child with him on such an errand fraught with danger Hugh could not guess; but it happened that just then the sheriff took it upon himself to explain this part of the mystery.

"This is Mr. Campertown, the owner of the plant," he told Dr. Richter. "He was on the road when his car broke down, and as we came along and he heard about what had happened up here he asked us to bring him with us. We mean to stop this foolish business before more blood is shed, if we have to bundle out every one of those hired guards, and take charge of the safety of the plant ourselves. The majesty of the law must be upheld, no matter who suffers."

With that he reëntered his car, and both vehicles moved off toward the works, leaving the strikers talking excitedly among themselves. Evidently many of the most turbulent among them were for trying to wreak summary vengeance on the man whom they held

responsible for the shooting. It took considerable fervid oratory on the part of the discrete padrone to convince them that such a step would be a most foolish one, since it must alienate public sympathy, and result in landing some of them in jail.

Dr. Richter paid no more attention to what might happen over at the plant. It mattered nothing to him if those armed guards were thrust out, and told to depart. He was concerned only with the taking care of the wounded strikers, and of the women who had also been in the crowd when that murderous fire was turned upon them after they had been warned to disperse, and had not moved fast enough to please the armed bullies who, from their defenses, had opened upon them with such disastrous results.

"If we must open an emergency hospital here," remarked Dr. Richter to Hugh and Arthur, who stuck close to his side, "we ought to find out if there is any sort of suitable building in this collection of shacks and small houses."

"I was going to mention the fact, Doctor," suggested Hugh, "that I saw a frame building

which I think must be used for a school. It seemed to me that it could be made to serve the purpose, if cleaned out in a hurry. Shall I sound the padrone about it?"

"If you will, Hugh," replied the other, with a smile, which showed what faith he had in the ability of the young scout master to accomplish things, founded on what he had already seen done.

It was quickly arranged with the old padrone, who set a number of women to work cleaning out the little schoolhouse. When this had been accomplished they could remove the most dangerously wounded to its shelter, and then even though a storm should come on they would not be exposed to the weather.

Meanwhile Dr. Richter was making preparations for removing several of the other injured strikers to the hospital at Farmingdale, where they could receive the proper treatment free of all expense.

In this labor he was ably assisted by some of the scouts, and it was settled that Nurse Arnold, as the older and more experienced of the attendants, should accompany the ambulance

with its load of suffering humanity to the distant city.

"I think you put a flea in the sheriff's ear, Doctor, when you told him these people were shot when they were running away," Hugh remarked, as they stood and watched the ambulance move along the road, to come back again for another load later on.

"That was just what I meant to do," replied the other, seriously. "I wanted to impress the fact on him to start with, that it was not a battle, but a massacre, for as far as we know all the injuries are on the side of the strikers. Then again, it struck me that a wealthy man like that Mr. Campertown, who is a millionaire I believe, ought to pay more attention to what is being done in his name. Why, some of these women could have torn his clothes off if the padrone had not kept them in subjection. They glared at the owner of the works like tiger-cats, and I could see their hands working as if they longed to lay hold of him."

Hugh turned and looked at the several figures still lying under the tree, and a big sigh welled up from his very heart.

"I certainly hope," he said, "that what Mr. Campertown has seen here to-day will open his eyes to what his duty is toward those who work for him. He has seen how horribly these people have to live even with the wages they used to get; and he must realize that it means almost starvation for them to take what has been offered lately."

"Yes, if he knew what was best for him he would do what some other employers have done—even be satisfied to suffer a temporary loss rather than cut the wages of their faithful employees. I know several big-hearted men who have done that same thing. They say they can stand a loss for a time, but their men could not. It would hardly be safe for Mr. Campertown to wander over this way while the strikers are so furious, or to let that handsome little grandson of his get away from him."

"Then that was his grandchild?" asked Arthur. "He seemed to be as pretty a three-year-old as I ever saw. Even the dago women were staring at him, and then looking at their own ragged and dirty children as if comparing the lot of the two classes."

Hugh felt a thrill pass over him when he heard the surgeon say what he did. He, too, had been very much taken with the rosy-cheeked little chap who sat in the big touring car alongside the owner of the cement plant. It gave him a bad feeling to even think of harm befalling such a fine lad through the desire for revenge on the part of some of these men or women who had seen their kind shot down in cold blood by the paid deputies of this same rich man.

"I hope it will never come to that," he remarked.

"You never can tell what some of these hot-blooded foreigners will do," the surgeon replied. "They might think to get even with Mr. Campertown, or it is even possible they would try to make better terms with him by hiding his little grandchild, and bargaining that way. It's a common occurrence over in their country to kidnap people, and hold them for a ransom."

Just then Hugh happened to see Alec beckoning to him to approach, and so he wandered over to where the other was standing along with Bud Morgan, both of them having the air of fellows who had come upon a mystery.

CHAPTER III.

MASTER AND MEN.

When Hugh joined the other scouts Alec took him by the sleeve and after a cautious glance around remarked:

"We've been wanting to tell you something this little while back, Hugh; but you seemed to be so wrapped up with what Dr. Richter was saying and doing that we've just kept waiting and waiting."

"What's it all about, then, fellows?" asked the scout master wonderingly.

"Why, that Nurse Jones must have known Mr. Campertown before, we think, Hugh, by the strange way she acted all the time he was near by," replied Bud, anxious to do his part of the talking.

"I didn't happen to notice her," Hugh told them. "I was too busy watching Mr. Campertown myself, and that sheriff who means to run things here from now on. Tell me what the nurse did?"

"Oh, just seemed to try and cower back as if she didn't want the rich man to notice her!" Alec hastened to say. "Yes, she even fixed her eyes on him and that pretty kid as though she could eat one of them up."

"Or else kill Mr. Campertown with a look," added Bud. "I don't think it was any love for him that made her stare so, and want to keep back out of sight."

Hugh shook his head.

"It doesn't concern us that I can see whether Nurse Jones ever knew that gentleman before or not," he told the others.

"'Course not," admitted Bud, with a shrug of his shoulders; "but all the same it seems queer that they should happen to meet, and here of all places. I was hoping he would see her, for I wanted to know how he'd act, but he was too much taken up looking at the field hospital we arranged here. Then again, the scowls on the faces of all these dagoes must have given him a bad feeling, I should think."

"Well, since it's none of our affair, let's forget about it then," Hugh told them. "Nurse Jones knows her business, and even her bright face is enough in itself to help cheer a suffer-

ing fellow up. Now that you're here wait until I get the rest of the boys around, for I've got an idea I want to put before you all. If you think as I do we can fix things that way."

This aroused the curiosity of the other two, just as Hugh had expected would be the case. They were compelled to wait, however, until he had beckoned to Arthur and the other two, who soon joined them.

"Hey, what's all this deep, dark mystery mean?" demanded Billy Worth, as he joined the circle.

"Hugh's got something to say to us, you know," replied Alec. "Now, please hit it up, Mr. Scout Master! Are we going to hike back to our jolly camp on the raging Hurricane right away? I shall be sorry, because I'm getting head over ears interested in this Red Cross work, and hoped we might stay around a while longer so as to pick up a few more pointers on how to do things."

Hugh smiled as he heard this.

"Then I guess I can count on *your* vote in favor of the proposal I meant to make you all," he told Alec.

"As what?" asked Billy, eagerly.

"I was thinking that I'd dispatch a messenger to the camp, and tell the rest of the fellows what we've struck over here. They might break camp and head this way, to put up the tents somewhere close by. Then all of us could hang around and learn considerable in the way of taking charge of wounded persons."

"A good idea, Hugh!" cried Billy enthusiastically.

"Dr. Richter and Nurse Jones are mighty kind about explaining just how things are done, and why a certain way is best," declared Ralph. "Count on me as favoring the idea, Hugh."

"My answer goes without asking," remarked Arthur, who was having the time of his life, now that he had an opportunity to rub elbows with a real Red Cross ambulance corps in operation, and see with his own eyes how everything was conducted with systematic exactness.

"Of course the other fellows ought to have a share in the lesson," admitted Ralph Kenyon, without any hesitation.

"Move we make it unanimous, fellows?" suggested Alec.

"All right, then," the scout master told them, looking satisfied, for he always liked to know that he had the majority of his fellow members with him. "We'll call it settled, and, Ralph, I appoint you and Alec a committee of two to run back to camp and carry the news."

There was no frowning on the part of the chosen pair. They seemed perfectly willing to carry out the orders of their leader. Possibly it occurred to the boys that there would, after all, be considerable sport in astonishing the other fellows with a graphic account of all that had happened to them since they left camp just after breakfast that same morning.

"Help them pack up, and the tents as well as other heavy stuff that can be carried as we did before—on poles dragged Indian fashion with the other ends on the ground," Hugh called out after the pair as they were immediately starting forth on their errand.

"All right, Hugh, we understand," Alec shouted back as he ran. "I should think you could look for us not more'n two hours from now. It may take some little while to get the

tents down, and things packed. So-long, everybody. Hope there won't be any more action until we get back again."

In doing this Hugh believed he was favoring his comrades truly. They could enjoy the delights of camping at almost any time, but an opportunity to work in conjunction with the Red Cross did not come every day, and they would show their wisdom if they took advantage of the golden chance.

All scouts are supposed to learn a certain amount of surgical work, and what is known as "first aid to the injured"; but it rests with each individual as to whether or not he cares to continue the study beyond a certain point. If he feels a deep and abiding interest in this noble work of assisting those in pain and suffering, he can grasp such opportunities as come his way to acquire further education along those particular lines.

Hugh and Arthur were just such boys, and there were several others whom the leader fancied might be greatly benefited by contact with Dr. Richter and the Red Cross nurses. It was in hopes of awakening the smoldering fire within the minds of these chums that Hugh

conceived the idea of having the entire camp moved from the bank of the Hurricane to a spot closer to the foreign settlement, where the emergency hospital was about to be established.

When the little schoolhouse had been emptied of its benches and desks and thoroughly cleaned and disinfected according to the directions of Dr. Richter, a fire was lighted in the stove in order to dry the floor more quickly.

Finally cots were obtained through the influence of the friendly padrone, and when these had been arranged under the eye of Nurse Jones, the place began to look somewhat like what it was intended to be—a makeshift or emergency hospital.

Here the wounded strikers were carefully taken; and when those who crowded around and gaped at everything that was done saw how careful the scouts and the Red Cross people were in trying to avoid giving more pain than could be helped, they chattered volubly among themselves, and even gave Hugh and his chums what were meant to be friendly smiles.

It was well on toward eleven o'clock when

Hugh discovered a procession coming along the road. The main body of scouts were arriving, carrying their luggage with them after the manner of roving Indian families; only, some of the boys, instead of having a horse to drag the poles that sustained the heavy stuff, were compelled to perform this task.

Hugh had already decided that after the boys had taken a look at things it would be advisable for them to make camp at some little distance away from the village of shacks. There were several reasons for this, which would doubtless be sufficiently convincing to the other fellows, after they had been on the ground a short time.

More than this, the scout master had even taken a turn around with Billy Worth, and picked out the site for the camp, which would be sufficiently removed from the settlement, and yet not so very far away, either, that most of the boys could not hover around if it pleased them so to do.

There was no grumbling, at least that Hugh detected. To be sure this alteration of their plans interfered considerably with certain

things they may have laid out to do; but then scouts learn to take what comes, and with a cheery spirit meet conditions that may from time to time arise.

At noon they were so far advanced in fixing up their new camp that they had a cooked meal, to which Hugh and the others, who had worked so hard since early morning, certainly did full justice.

They had learned that the sheriff had carried out his threat, and that he must have convinced Mr. Campertown that it was his duty to discharge the paid and armed men who were guarding his property, now that the regular authorities had taken charge of matters.

Ralph Kenyon, who had been scouting around in the vicinity of the plant, without allowing himself to be seen, came in about dinner-time with a report that gave Hugh considerable satisfaction.

"What d'ye think, fellows," he announced, as flushed and panting for breath he burst upon them while they were settling down to having their midday meal. "The whole pack have got the grand bounce—the guards, I mean, of course. Saw them slipping out on

the other side and going away in a bunch, guns and all, like they didn't want the strikers to know they were outside the breastworks, for fear something might happen to 'em."

"That begins to look as if we wouldn't have any more cases to attend to, eh, boys?" remarked Dr. Richter, who with Nurse Jones had accepted the warm invitation extended by the scout master to join them in the meal.

"Yes, if only they go away, and stay away, there should be no more trouble," ventured Hugh. "If Mr. Campertown could only talk with the old padrone, and see for himself how little can be bought for the wages his men have been earning in the past, he might hold out the olive branch toward them. But I'm afraid from his looks that he's a pretty strong-willed man."

Somehow Hugh was looking out of the corner of his eye toward Nurse Jones when he made this assertion, and he plainly saw her nod her head, as though from some good reason of her own, which she did not choose everyone to know, she could testify to this fact. It caused Hugh to remember what Alec and the other scout had said about Nurse Jones being

deeply interested in the owner of the plant and his handsome little grandchild.

After the meal was over many of the boys went over to the settlement to watch what Dr. Richter and Nurse Jones did on their rounds. Then came the Red Cross ambulance again to carry the rest of the wounded who could safely be moved over the rough roads to the big hospital at Farmingdale, where they would have every possible attention.

Hugh noticed that Nurse Arnold handed the padrone a crumpled piece of paper. She said one of the injured men had written a note after he had seen how splendidly they were to be cared for; and the padrone looked very much pleased when he had read its contents.

It was about two hours after the ambulance with its second load had departed from the camp that Ralph hurriedly sought Hugh, with the alarming intelligence that he had seen three of the discharged guards skulking along on the other side of the cement plant, as though they might have come back to make trouble of some sort.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORK OF THE SCOUTS.

"Where was this that you saw the discharged guards?" asked the scout master, after Ralph had made his report.

"Over on the other side of the plant," came the reply. "You see I was just prowling around, curious to discover what lay there, because none of our fellows had bothered taking a look at that side of the stockade, and I wanted to know how they meant to defend it in case of a rush from one or two hundred strikers."

"That was all right, Ralph," Hugh told him; "though it's a wonder you didn't get a hail from one of the sheriff's posse and be asked what business you had looking around."

"To go on with my story, Hugh, I want to say that I don't think much of that same posse of the sheriff. Why, he's just picked up a lot of ordinary men in a hurry, and armed them with guns and badges to back him up. They

might fight all right in a pinch, but let me tell you they would never be able to guard that plant against a troop of wideawake Boy Scouts. Why, we could creep in on 'em while they dozed at their posts, and first thing they knew it would be 'hands up everybody; you're IT!'"

Hugh laughed at hearing Ralph speak in this strain. He knew that the other was considered an unusually clever scout, for which his love of the woods and former business of hunting and trapping game had especially fitted him.

"Well, that's a good word for all scouts you're giving, Ralph," he said. "And so it was while you were sizing up the watchfulness of the new guards that you discovered the presence of the old ones, was it?"

"Yes, I happened to be in a position to drop down in the brush at the time, and they didn't glimpse me for a cent," continued Ralph, with an unconscious touch of pride in his voice. "They were all eyes for the plant, and I could understand they didn't want to be seen by anybody."

"Perhaps they'd forgotten something, and

were returning to get it?" suggested the scout master, in order to draw the other out.

"Not much," was Ralph's vigorous protest, "they acted too suspicious for that, I tell you, Hugh. If they had wanted to get something in an open and aboveboard way why wouldn't they walk straight up to the gate and send word to the sheriff?"

"It does look a little that way," admitted Hugh thoughtfully.

"If you asked me straight from the shoulder what those sneaks were meaning to do," continued the active scout, "I'd say they expected to steal something they knew was in the plant —something worth while at that. For all we know they may be crooks who took up with the offer of big wages when Mr. Campertown's manager sent word to the agency he wanted guards."

"Perhaps break into the safe of the company, which they think may hold enough money to pay them for their trouble; that's what you mean, is it, Ralph?"

"Something along those lines," came the answer.

"It may turn out that way," Hugh told him a little dubiously.

"Sounds as if you didn't take any too much stock in my guess, Hugh?"

"Well," remarked the scout master, "when you stop to consider that the sheriff of the county is in charge of the plant now, and has his posse standing guard with orders to shoot any trespasser on sight, it doesn't strike me as reasonable."

"But what would you think might be the reason for their coming back, then?" demanded Ralph, somewhat disappointed because the scout leader had failed to back him up in his theory.

"I can only give a guess at it," mused Hugh. "It seems to me as if the explanation might be connected with the disgust and anger of these guards at losing their fat job. They may have talked it over, and sent these three back to prowl around to see if something couldn't be done to start trouble between the posse and the strikers."

"Whew! I didn't think of that!" exclaimed Ralph. "If such a thing happened it would sort of gloss over their own crazy act in firing

on men when their backs were turned, wouldn't it? If the sheriff had to fight to hold his own after discharging them, it might make the public excuse their terrible blunder. Hugh, there may be a whole lot in what you say."

"You didn't try to follow those three guards, of course, Ralph?"

"Well, hardly," grinned the other scout. "It was broad daylight, and, while I'm a fair hand at dodging after any fellow, I knew they'd get on to me right away. I just lay there in the bushes and watched 'em go along. But, Hugh, they sheered away from the plant before they got out of my sight, so I'm sure they never walked up to the gate and made any request."

"There's one thing I can do to try and keep the peace," ventured Hugh, as though his own suggestion might still be in his mind.

"What might that be?" inquired the other, curiously.

"Try and have a talk with the old padrone," the scout master informed him. "You know he can understand English all right, and he speaks it after a fashion. If he were put on his guard I think he would warn his men that they must not under any conditions be drawn

into a dispute with armed parties pretending to be members of the sheriff's posse, for these men may try and play that smart game, you know."

"Here comes Dr. Richter, Hugh, and he's got some pleasant news for you, if that smile on his face stands for anything."

The Red Cross surgeon quickly joined the two chums.

"Things are already beginning to take a turn for the better," he announced.

"Do you mean that the ones who are so badly wounded will have a fair show to recover?" asked Hugh, feeling as though the burden that had been weighing so heavily on his own heart was being lifted.

"Well, that was hardly what I meant," admitted the other, "though so far as I can say just now there's a fighting chance for them all, and with reasonably good luck we'll pull them through. But I've just had a few lines from Mr. Campertown over at the plant."

"Something about the wounded men, I venture?" remarked Ralph.

"Just what it was," the surgeon acceded. "It must be that the sight of them lying here

on these old faded blankets stirred him more or less, especially when he remembered that they had once been his faithful workers, and that it was through the agency of men hired with his money that they came to get these severe injuries."

"Then he had a proposal to make, sir?" asked Hugh, guessing as much from the way in which Surgeon Richter spoke.

"He mentioned in his brief note that he would like me to have some of you boys come over to the works; that there were a number of good cots we could have, together with all the clean sheets and blankets needed to give the wounded comfortable beds while they were in our temporary hospital. I sent word back that I was going to gratefully accept his offer, and thanked him for it."

"Mr. Campertown is getting his eyes opened," observed Ralph, dryly. "Seeing such terrible things is going to make him think a whole lot different from what he's been doing."

"I only hope it does," said Hugh, sincerely.

"If such a thing comes about," remarked the surgeon, with a positive ring to his voice,

"you Boy Scouts will have had a whole lot to do with the industrial rebellion. He was highly pleased with what he heard about your carryings-on here. The sheriff told me that when I saw him last. I really think he wants to have a chance to talk with you, Hugh, and so if I were you I'd be one of those to go over after these things."

"Thank you, Dr. Richter, I will," replied the scout master, who naturally felt a little thrill of elation when he heard these words of sincere praise from the lips of one he thought so highly of as the Red Cross surgeon. "Ralph, will you pick out half a dozen of the fellows to accompany us, while I hunt up the padrone? While I've got that other thing in my mind I'd better put the padrone on his guard."

"All right, Hugh; meet you a little later at this tree. I'll pick out a husky lot, so they can carry the cots if they happen to be heavy. It was right decent of old Campertown to make this offer, I take it. He's seeing a light, all right; and if things keep on working as they seem now, better times are coming for these poor dagoes."

Ten minutes later Hugh joined the impatient group that was waiting for him under the tree in question. They immediately started toward the plant, and quickly arrived at the gate.

Here they found a man on guard, who had evidently received orders to admit any of the wearers of the khaki who might appear, for he stepped aside and waved them inside the stockade.

Besides Ralph and Hugh there were Billy Worth, Tom Sherwood, Jack Dunham, Bud Morgan, Blake Merton and a boy who went by the name of "Whistling Smith." The last mentioned had not been in camp at the time Hugh and his five chums hurried in the direction of the scene of battle; he and another scout, Monkey Stallings by name, a fellow who delighted in doing all sorts of acrobatic feats, had arrived later in the morning, having hiked all the way from Oakvale since early dawn.

To enter the works they had to pass through the office. Here they found Mr. Campertown, and seated on a chair was the merry-faced little chap, whose smile had already captivated most of the boys who had seen him. Reuben

Campertown, Hugh had learned, was the only child of the rich man's dead son, and evidently the apple of his grandfather's eye.

The millionaire greeted them with a smile. Hugh realized that at such a time Mr. Campertown looked vastly different from what he had believed him to be before, when that gloomy and even stern expression had marked his face.

"I'm glad you came, boys," he told them, and his eyes rested longest on Hugh, as though he had somehow learned that much of the credit which the Red Cross surgeon had given to the scouts for their knowledge of "first aid to the injured" was to be credited to their efficient leader.

Mr. Campertown himself proceeded to show them where the supplies he had mentioned in his note to Dr. Richter could be found; and the cheery-looking little curly-headed chap held fast to his hand all the while.

"Take what cots you think you can use, boys," the owner of the works told them. "Take also this pile of sheets and blankets. Tell the surgeon I do not expect them back again. It is as little as I can do to try and

repair some of the mistakes that have occurred in connection with this unfortunate business."

The boys started to carry off the cots needed first. Hugh had found out that in all they required four, with the necessary sheets and blankets.

"The padrone will open his eyes when he sees all this coming in," remarked Billy Worth, who had loaded himself down with a cot and some of the other things.

"By the way," Mr. Campertown said, turning to Hugh, and looking a little confused. "I find that my manager laid in enough provisions for a long siege. Now that things have taken on a new look, I'd like to get rid of some of this unnecessary food. There's a heap of supplies you boys can take over to the Red Cross surgeon with my compliments. He may find something in the lot he can make use of for his patients. I hope so, at any rate."

Hugh felt like giving a hurrah, though he resisted this impulse and only smiled as he thanked the other. According to his way of thinking this wealthy man was having something of a revolution come about within him. All his ideas in connection with the abyss that

should exist between an employer and those who worked for him for wages were in danger of being transformed.

"It must have been that pitiful sight of those wounded men that did it," Hugh was telling himself; "that and the dark looks on the faces of the men and women in the crowd. He never dreamed what was going to happen to him this day when he started out with his little grandson for a ride in his car. I hope it's going to be a red letter day for Mr. Campertown, that's all."

As the boys could not carry all the cots, supplies of bedding, and the heap of groceries as well, they gladly promised to come back for a second load. Hugh was about to also pack some of the hams and other things over to the settlement when Mr. Campertown laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Please stay here with me while your comrades are gone," he said pleasantly. "I want to ask you some questions about your organization. Tell me what you have done in the past? This is not the first time you boys have managed to stretch out a helping hand to those who needed assistance?"

Thrilled by this request, Hugh was only too happy to obey. He knew he could relate a number of things connected with Oakvale Troop of Boy Scouts that would prove interesting to Mr. Campertown. And all the while he hoped to be able to work in a few words that might serve to make the rich man consider the wisdom of bridging the chasm that lay between himself and his former employees.

The boys returned and carried away the rest of the stuff. Still Hugh and Mr. Campertown sat there in the office and talked. The little boy had gone to sleep in his grandfather's arms, with his curly head resting on that protecting shoulder. Every time the owner of the plant looked down at his rosy face a tender expression could be seen on his own usually stern countenance.

"The sun rises and sets for him in that child," was what Hugh told himself. He wondered what it might mean to Mr. Campertown if anything happened to deprive him of this one consolation in his declining years, since the boy's parents were both dead, he had told Hugh.

The scout master in that hour of time had

told the master of the works a great many things in connection with what he and his chums had done in times past. His narrative was extremely modest, and to listen one would be inclined to think Hugh had no more to do with these exploits than the lowest scout in the troop; but Mr. Campertown could read between the lines.

Hugh was thinking of taking his leave when the gentleman startled him by asking a question.

"Would you mind telling me, Hugh, who the Red Cross nurse is I noticed assisting Dr. Richter; the one with the color in her cheeks? I had just a glimpse of her face, and somehow it seemed strangely familiar, though I don't seem able to place it. What is her name, my son?"

CHAPTER V.

HUGH SCENTS A MYSTERY.

When the owner of the plant asked Hugh that strange question it flashed upon the scout master that his comrades had noticed the Red Cross nurse acting in a peculiar fashion at the time Mr. Campertown sat there in the big touring car in which the sheriff and some of his hastily summoned posse had come on the scene.

Yes, he remembered how Alec, acting as spokesman for the others, had mentioned the fact of her seeming to shrink back as though to avoid being particularly noticed by the millionaire. She had stared very hard at the little boy, too, and Alec had, in his impetuous way, even gone so far as to characterize her look as a *hungry* one, as though she could eat the child.

He knew that Mr. Campertown was looking at him as he waited to hear his reply; and so the boy hastened to collect his thoughts.

"Why, I never saw them before they came in the ambulance, sir," he commenced to say. "There were two nurses with Dr. Richter, both of them connected with the Red Cross hospital in Farmingdale, sir."

"Yes, I understand, Hugh; but it was the younger nurse to whom I was referring," the other hastened to tell the scout master.

"Her name is Nurse Jones," Hugh replied; "that's all I know about her, except that she's got a natural gift along the line of nursing people. When she comes along they seem to forget all their troubles in her sunny smile. I watched this happen more than a few times, sir."

He could see that Mr. Campertown looked disappointed. Evidently something in connection with Nurse Jones had caused the rich man to want to know more about her.

Hugh told himself that it was none of his business, and he had better forget all about it; but at the same time he was going to find this a difficult thing to do, especially when his boyish curiosity was bound to be piqued continually.

After he left Mr. Campertown, Hugh

walked back to the foreign settlement. Here he found the padrone watching the changes that were taking place inside that little frame schoolhouse, under the supervision of the surgeon and the nurse.

Hugh looked more closely at the latter than he had up to then allowed himself to do. He noted that she was an uncommonly fine-looking young woman, with a healthy color, bright eyes, and just the cheery expression on her face that would act like a tonic upon any sufferer who might chance to fall under her care.

Once Hugh started and held his breath. It was when the thought struck him that a certain expression about Nurse Jones' face when she looked sad reminded him of Mr. Campertown himself! That was a startling idea, and set the boy's brain to doing all sorts of acrobatic feats in trying to figure out what it might mean.

"Hugh," whispered Alec in his ear just about that time, "you should have been here to watch Nurse Jones when she learned what the crusty old millionaire owner of the plant had opened his heart to do. She listened as though her breath had almost been taken away. Then

I saw such a heavenly smile creep over her face! Say, it reminded me of that cherub we used to see in the window of Decker's art store in Oakland."

"Come, you're beginning to get poetical, I'm afraid, Alec," urged Hugh, though the intelligence had really affected him more or less. "Of course, as a hospital nurse she felt pleased to see these nice cots and sheets and sweet blankets coming in, to take the place of that riff-raff the old padrone supplied. It must have been a sore trial to a Red Cross nurse to ever have to handle such stuff."

"Mebbe so, Hugh," added Alec, evidently still unconvinced; "but it's my opinion Nurse Jones was thinking more about the change in *him* than anything connected with clean hospital supplies."

When everything had been attended to the result was most impressive. Clean, white bedclothing and blankets, with cots for the patients, added a thousand per cent. to the attractiveness of the temporary hospital.

"Look at the padrone, how his black eyes glisten," said Ralph Kenyon to Hugh, as they

stood there and surveyed the interior of the little schoolhouse.

"Yes; he's pleased over the way his people are being taken care of," the scout master replied. "This is going a great ways toward checking the bitter feeling of hostility these hot-blooded foreigners were beginning to show for Mr. Campertown, their former employer."

"Huh!" grunted Billy Worth. "If you asked me now I'd say that the padrone's got that smile that won't come off on his phiz on account of the fine pile of grub over yonder that the gentleman sent to the surgeon. Every time he looks that way I c'n see his lips work, as though they were watering at the thought of feasts to come."

"Oh! Billy," exclaimed Alec Sands, "that's hardly fair for you to judge everybody by your own standard of thinking. We all know your weakness, and how many a time you've confessed to dreaming of big feasts. There goes Hugh over to talk with the padrone again. I wonder what he's telling him now."

The scout master had considered it a good time to sow some seed in the mind of the man whose will swayed the strikers. That was al-

ways present with Hugh. He knew these poor foreigners would soon be in a pitiful condition unless they had a chance to take up their former work again.

"You see, padrone," he said to the old man, as he reached his side, "things are looking brighter already. Mr. Campertown is beginning to repent having acted as he did. These wounded people may be the means of starting up the works again, with all the old employees at their former wages."

"Eet would be goot eef that could be so," remarked the padrone, with an anxious look on his face. "He do not understand how it cost so much to lif for us all. He never cut the wage down eef he know that. I haf think it all was over when my people they be shot down like animals; but like you say, young sigñor, it may come to the good turn yet."

"You see how generously he has acted," continued Hugh—"sending over not only the cots and bedding, but food as well. That shows he is sorry for what happened. If only you can keep the hot-heads among your men quiet for a little while, padrone, something tells me it is all going to turn out right for you."

"I promise you eet shall be so," the old man said solemnly. "My word eet ees the law with my people. They be guided by what I say."

Hugh felt easier in his mind after what he had said to the padrone. If those three meddling former guards did attempt to stir up trouble between the strikers and the sheriff's posse, he believed the firm hand of the padrone would be able to check the mischief in its beginning.

"I want you to come over to our camp just before dark," Hugh continued, "and take supper with us all. Have you ever met with any Boy Scouts over in your country, for they are to be found all over the world these days, even in Japan, and out in the Philippines, I understand?"

The padrone was bright enough to grasp what Hugh meant; but he shook his head in the negative.

"I haf not seen any, but my people they write to me their boys they be scouts and wear the uniform," the old man replied proudly, as he even ventured to let his hand fall with a certain amount of respect on the khaki sleeve of Hugh's coat, and then turned his eyes curi-

ously upon the several badges the boy had been given the right to wear.

"Yes, lots of big changes have taken place in Italy since you came away, I suppose," Hugh told him. "In Europe boys become scouts with the idea of serving their country as soldiers later on. Over here, in America, we never hold that notion up before our recruits, because our motto is to help those in trouble, and avoid all fighting, when we can do it with credit to ourselves."

The doctor and Nurse Jones also promised to join the scouts again at supper time, so Billy Worth and a corps of assistants hurried off to start preparations for the evening meal.

"We'll try and make the poor old padrone forget all about his troubles for once," the good-natured Billy had said when he heard who was coming. "Somehow, I kind of like that chap; there's a deal of humor in him, once you get it on tap. And I reckon he hasn't slept any too sound ever since this trouble came up between his people and their employer. Yes, we'll treat him to a good square meal, such as he hasn't had for many a day."

The afternoon was wearing away, and night

would soon be coming along. Hugh found himself wondering whether darkness would bring about any change in the relations existing between the workmen and their former boss. He was thinking about the suspicious actions of those three discharged guards when he fell into this train of speculation.

Just as he was about to leave for the camp of the scouts, one of the sheriff's posse came to the emergency hospital with a package, saying that Mr. Campertown wished Dr. Richter and Nurse Jones to please accept the trifling addition to their supplies, as he feared they would lack some of their customary food while compelled to remain in the foreign settlement.

When the surgeon, with a smile of appreciation, opened the package—the nurse standing by with a look of wonder on her pink face—Hugh saw it contained a number of things that the head man of the guards must have laid in for his own entertainment, and was unable to take away with him: dainties, such as sardines, canned lobsters, condensed milk, tea, chocolate, and the like—and even a box of fine candy, which the gallant surgeon immediately placed in the hands of Nurse Jones.

CHAPTER VI.

AROUND THE SCOUTS' CAMPFIRE.

"This makes me think of some of the bully times we've had in days gone by," Billy Worth was saying at the moment Hugh entered the new camp, "and we expected company from town, and were spreading ourselves to show folks what fine cooks scouts can be when they try real hard."

There was indeed considerable bustle in evidence. Being "chief cook and bottle-washer," for the occasion, as he termed it, Billy had set a number of the fellows to doing different tasks. Harold Tremaine and Ned Twyford sat with their backs against a tree, peeling potatoes; Tom Sherwood, who often boasted of his strong eyes, had been delegated to prepare a big mess of onions, and, though bravely sticking to the job, despite the smarting, was already crying over his job.

Others were chopping wood and carrying the kindlings to where the cook could lay his

hand upon them as needed. As usual, Monkey Stallings swung head-downward from the limb of an adjacent tree; those who had given him such a suggestive nickname certainly knew what they were about, for the agile boy always seemed happier carrying on his remarkable gymnastics than when soberly standing on his feet.

Taken all in all, it was a bustling picture upon which the scout master looked as he stood there smiling. Billy quickly observed his coming, and called him over.

"Have you got a job for me, Billy?" asked Hugh, as though he meant every word of it, and would be only too willing to do his part in the great preparations going on.

"'Too many cooks spoil the broth,' Mr. Scout Master," replied Billy. "I guess I've got as many to see after as I can well manage, as it is. But I did want your valued advice as to whether we ought to cook a pot of rice, with all those potatoes and onions the fellows are preparing."

"Suit yourself, Billy. It takes considerable to fill fourteen mouths, and we expect three for company besides. If you're meaning to have

several fires going, it would be no harm to put on a kettle. Boiled rice is always a favorite of mine, hot or cold, so it isn't apt to go to waste."

"Some of the same'll go to *my waist* if the other grub gives out, you hear me!" declared Bud Morgan, who was giving the finishing touches to a third cooking fire that Billy had thought they might need.

So the good work went on, and as the sun sank out of sight behind the western horizon, supper was within hailing distance, to judge from the way some of those always hungry boys went about sniffing the delightful odors that filled the air. That is the time when the minutes drag as if they had leaden weights, and it seems as though someone must have surely imitated Joshua of old, and made the declining sun apparently stand still.

The padrone made his appearance in good time, and was given a seat of honor on one of the several logs that had been rolled up in a circle to serve the diners. His dark face was a mass of wrinkles now, for he was smiling all the time.

Perhaps it might be the padrone felt the

great honor that had been thrust on him when he was thus invited to eat with the uniformed scouts. Perhaps he was even thinking of how he could make boasts when next he wrote a letter to the old country, and narrated how he had rubbed elbows with the "real thing" in the shape of Boy Scouts.

The chances were, however, that those fine smells in the air had considerable to do with the expression of happiness on the padrone's face. He looked toward the cooking fires frequently, it might be noticed; and when Bud Morgan came near dropping one of the big frying-pans that was heaped with a mess of potatoes and onions, the padrone was seen to clasp his hands and look terribly frightened, as if he feared that after all he might be fated to lose his anticipated feast.

Then came Dr. Richter and Nurse Jones. The boys all got up and saluted upon their arrival. Billy had told them that was the sort of thing to do when they had a lady come to dine with them. Nurse Jones laughed quite merrily as she tried to return their salutation with a nod of her head.

Hugh believed she looked prettier than ever

when she did that. He also wondered what Mr. Campertown would think if he could only see her now. Would the cobwebs in his confused brain be swept aside, so that he could remember who she put him in mind of?

That supper was one none of those who took part in would soon forget. The boys were brimful of frolicsome humor, as was usually the case. They cracked jokes, and made humorous remarks as they served their guests and then themselves. This crackling exchange of badinage was like the sauce for the meal—it livened matters, and kept everybody in jolly spirits.

Indeed, Dr. Richter told them he could not remember when he had enjoyed a meal as he had that one. As a doctor connected with a hospital he may have been used to picking up his dinners at all hours, and also under some queer conditions; but it hardly fell to his lot to sit before a crackling campfire, with a dozen or more lively scouts in uniform, and tasting genuine camp fare, cooked by one who prided himself on having mastered all the wrinkles of the art.

Then again, no doubt, the atmosphere sur-

rounding them had something to do with their enjoyment. They were far enough away from the settlement not to hear the cries of the children or the barking of the many dogs. Hugh had made sure that the camp was located where the prevailing wind would blow *toward,* not from the village, which fact was calculated to make things more pleasant for the campers.

Nurse Jones also seemed to enjoy her dinner very much. She had to decline ever so many times when the generous hosts tried to keep the contents of her pannikin from diminishing or the coffee in her tin cup from lowering.

China and cut-glass may do all very well when there is a snowy damask tablecloth and silver to keep them company; but about the campfire nothing equals plain honest tinware, unless it may be the more expensive aluminum ware, that some campers prefer to take with them, owing to its many good qualities, such as extreme lightness in weight, and the fact that no grease is needed in frying flapjacks for breakfast.

As before, the doctor continued to ask many questions connected with scoutcraft. He was deeply interested in the movement and all that

it stood for. Until recently he had paid little attention to the activities of such boys whom he may have been accustomed to seeing, clad in khaki, on the streets of his native town; but after making the discovery that these lads had it in them to accomplish great good in dozens of ways, he wanted to know all about their plans and aspirations, as well as their history.

So it came about he heard accounts of many episodes of the past, such as have been faithfully related in preceding books of this series. Each scout took occasion to modestly recount some incident connected with their many experiences.

Some of them had been with the State Militia on one of their annual training trips, serving in the mock battle that had occurred, as a Signal Corps detachment, and winning high praise from the general in command because of their knowledge of the game and the valuable assistance afforded the army to which they were attached.

In other fields of scout activities the boys had played their part with credit to themselves and the organization to which they belonged. There had been those among them who had

visited the Florida coast, and assisted the life-savers in their work when a wreck was driven on the reefs during a storm. On another occasion they had accompanied the Naval Reserve aboard a war vessel placed at their disposal by the United States Government; and while there had picked up a fund of useful information concerning such means of defense against a possible foreign enemy.

So they had also gone off with the Government Geological Survey; and after a fashion proved themselves worthy helpers to the members of Uncle Sam's Flying Squadron upon a certain occasion, when the chance was given them to see something along such lines.

All these interesting things and many more were touched upon by those ready talkers, as they sat there and enjoyed the cheery fire.

Looking around at those bright youthful faces, the Red Cross surgeon felt that he had been amply repaid for taking this hurry call trip out to the scene of the riot, when that message asking for help had come to them in Farmingdale.

But for that he would have missed a great treat, for he might never again have met with

such a splendid opportunity to make the acquaintance of these sterling fellows, and while seated at their campfire hear scores of interesting things connected with the ambitions and yearnings of a true Boy Scout.

And Nurse Jones also seemed glad she was there. She had just partaken of her first real camp dinner, and enjoyed it very much indeed. Now she was listening to all that was being said with the deepest interest.

Many times Hugh had noticed a smile on her face, as though her thoughts were of a pleasant nature. Then she would suddenly remember something, for he could see her shut lips firmly together.

Hugh wondered if her thoughts could be wandering in the direction of the stern millionaire who, with his little grandson, expected to sleep on cots over in the offices of the cement works.

Whistling Smith was called upon for an exhibition of his specialty, for he had a remarkable talent in his line, and could give astonishing imitations of the warble of every known species of bird, as well as some imaginary ones in the bargain. Then he could whistle all the

latest popular songs with variations that always called out vociferous applause on the part of the listeners.

Monkey Stallings expected that when they had tired Whistling Smith out they would be calling on him to perform. He even went so far as to lay his plan of campaign, and meant to keep his greatest "stunt" until the very last, so that it was apt to leave a pleasant taste in the mouth; for Monkey was as artful as the frisky animal after which he had been nicknamed.

It happened, however, that the call for him to help amuse the invited guests never got beyond that expectation in the mind of the intended performer. Something came about that effectually banished all thoughts of humorous antics from everybody's mind.

Dr. Richter was perhaps beginning to think it high time he and the Red Cross nurse were tearing themselves away from this genial company, for he was observed to be secretly glancing at his watch when he thought none of the boys would be noticing him. Of course, it was not that he had grown weary of their company, for that would be next to impossible; but be-

fore long their several patients would be needing attention, since those left in charge could not know what to do in case of necessity.

It was just at this time they heard the sound of coming footfalls. Alec Sands, who possessed very keen hearing, caught the patter first, and he leaned over to call the attention of the scout master to the fact.

"Somebody coming, Hugh, and in a bit of a hurry, too!" he remarked. "Yes, and, unless I'm away off in my guess, there are a pair of them, in the bargain."

Ten seconds later and it was shown that Alec had been absolutely right in his figuring, for two forms were seen bearing hastily down on the camp fire.

"Why, Hugh," exclaimed Bud Morgan, "it's the sheriff, and that's Mr. Campertown along with him. The old gent looks all broken up over something, let me tell you. I wonder what's gone wrong over at the plant now?"

Hugh noticed that the first thing Mr. Campertown did was to look eagerly around the circle, and an expression of bitter disappointment took the place of the hope that had been so manifest in his face.

The sheriff addressed himself directly to Hugh, and at his first words "the cat was out of the bag," as Alec afterward remarked.

"Have any of you seen the little chap, Reuben Campertown?" asked the sheriff. "He has wandered off, and for the last half hour we've found no trace of him. A sudden hope that he might have come this way brought us over, but it seems to be blind guess after all."

CHAPTER VII.

A CALL TO FURTHER DUTY.

If a bomb had been dropped into the camp, it could hardly have created more of a shock, so far as Hugh, Dr. Richter, Nurse Jones, Alec Sands, and perhaps Ralph Kenyon were concerned.

For the first few seconds it seemed to Hugh that his heart must have stopped still with dread. He could see that the face of Mr. Campertown was haggard and drawn. He had apparently aged ten years in the few hours since the scout master last saw him. That was a pretty good index of the way the millionaire loved and almost worshiped his pretty little grandson.

Nurse Jones had turned very white, and put her hand to her throat, as though she felt herself choking. Hugh, however, forgot her in the excitement of the moment.

"Do you mean to tell us, Mr. Sheriff," he

asked, as soon as he could command his voice, "that the boy is lost?"

"Either strayed away, or else he's been kidnapped for a purpose!"

As the sheriff said this very sternly he fastened his accusing eyes on the old padrone. There could be no mistaking his meaning. He had dealt many times with some of these foreigners, and he knew only too well that they often had strange and un-American ways of accomplishing their purposes.

Just as Hugh and some of the boys had said in generally talking things over, carrying people off and holding them for a ransom has long been a custom in various lands of Europe. Evidently the officer believed these angry strikers, feeling they could not win their case in the ordinary way, had determined to resort to such a miserable game as this abduction of the child would be.

The affection felt by Mr. Campertown for his grandson must have been evident to every member of that crowd standing by at the time the sheriff and his posse had stopped for a minute or two on the way to oust the hired guards. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that

some of the wilder spirits among the men rendered furious by a contemplation of their supposed wrongs, and the presence of those wounded comrades, should plan to hit back at the rich man in his only vulnerable spot.

Hugh turned his eyes on the padrone. He felt a sudden chill in the region of his heart. Could the wily old man be guilty? Hugh had somehow come to rather like the padrone who had such singular power over his people that he usually could sway them to his way of thinking.

He felt it was almost impossible that the old leader should have consented to sit there at their campfire and partake of their food, if he were guilty of such a terrible thing.

Hugh immediately felt reassured as soon as he looked at the other. The swarthy face of the padrone was drawn, and Hugh thought there was an expression of injured pride upon it. His eyes flashed fire, and, as he drew himself up, he tried to express his feelings in his crude way.

"Eet ees that you believe some of my people they haf been take the kid away to hold heem ofer the head of the gentlemans. You do us

great wrong. We haf not yet been brought to the point that we make the war on children! And, eef ees be done, sure I must know of that same. I gif you my word not."

The sheriff was watching him with his keen eye. He had become accustomed to reading faces long ago, though doubtless some of these foreign ones were apt to give him more or less trouble.

"I have heard good reports of you, padrone," he said, slowly. "As a rule you have tried to guide your people along the road that led to their best interest. Perhaps you had nothing to do with this ill-advised strike. Let that pass. There is only one thing that engages our attention now, and that is the safe return of the boy. Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Si, excellency, it is plain to me," replied the old man, still looking hurt, as though he bitterly resented the accusation.

"Mr. Campertown will pay five thousand dollars for the safe return of his grandson," said the sheriff. "It is a shame that such a thing should happen, and as a rule I am utterly opposed to this blackmail business; but he in-

sists on making the offer, and there is nothing else for us to do but try and compromise a felony. Five thousand dollars is a big sum, padrone!"

"Eet ees a fortune to families that be very near starving," replied the padrone; "but I tell you that eef you find that any of my people haf take the child, even eef he be return safe and unharm, not one dollar shall be claim!"

"That's the stuff, padrone!" burst out Bud Morgan, unable to contain himself any longer.

The sheriff nodded his head, while still watching the padrone closely.

"I like the way you say that, padrone," he remarked. "It sounds honest. Perhaps this thing may have been done by some of the hotheads without your knowledge. They may have guessed that you would not stand for such a game. How about that, padrone?"

"That I do not belief," came the prompt reply. "All I can say ees that when I tell my people how eet ees, and that a thief haf taken a child to strike at the heart of Mr. Campertown, efery one will join me to hunt for eet. They do not haf much reason to lof Mr. Campertown this day of sorrow; but there was time

when they take off hats and cheer him when he come here to works."

"A mighty fair offer, I should say!" Billy Worth muttered.

The sheriff turned to Mr. Campertown and talked with him in low tones. Hugh believed the millionaire had been much impressed with the dignified words spoken by the old padrone. Perhaps they cut him to the quick, and made him realize that he had not been treating these employees of his of late as he should. Hugh hoped deep down in his boyish heart that great and lasting good was going to spring from all this trouble.

Presently the sheriff turned again. This time his eyes were on Hugh, and he beckoned to the scout master to join him, which the other did with promptness, scenting something in the line of action.

It turned out exactly that way, for the first thing the officer did was to lay a patronizing hand on Hugh's shoulder and say:

"Mr. Campertown here has requested me to ask you all to assist in the search for his grandchild. It seems a strange thing for a sheriff to rest his confidence in *boys,* but then I've

heard considerable about what you lads have accomplished in the past, and this is a case where 'beggars mustn't be choosers.' How do you feel about making a try to earn that splendid reward?"

Hugh looked the officer squarely in the eye as he replied calmly:

"You evidently do not know much about the rules governing Boy Scouts, Mr. Sheriff, or you wouldn't hold out that reward as an inducement for us to try and find the poor little chap. We are not allowed, as a rule, to accept pay for any service we render, and especially to those in trouble. All the same I'm sure every fellow around this campfire will be wild to offer his services in the search."

The big sheriff was very greatly impressed with what Hugh said, as his next words proved.

"That sounds fine, son. I reckon I don't know enough about the scout movement to make such an error of judgment as that. In all my experience this is the first time I ever heard anyone decline to be rewarded. If that's the way you scouts do things there's some hope for this old world yet. But we must

not lose any more time. Padrone, are you willing to stir up your people, and start a general alarm for the missing boy?"

"I will go right away, and efery man and woman they try their level best so to find eet," replied the padrone, as he saluted the sheriff and hurried off.

Hugh saw the officer follow his vanishing form with his eye, and then shake his head. From this the boy understood that, while much impressed with the manner of the padrone, he was not wholly convinced that the strikers were guiltless.

Mr. Campertown now turned to the scout master. Evidently he had been deeply interested in what Hugh had told him concerning the activities of the Oakvale scouts in times past. When this terrible necessity burst upon him so suddenly, and there had arisen so great a need of assistance, Mr. Campertown must have suddenly remembered that these lads had achieved marked success in tracking lost people. At any rate, this would account for his appeal through the sheriff for their aid in his time of need.

He looked very forlorn as he faced Hugh.

The boy thought he had never seen so great a change in any one in such a short time. Those who might have considered Mr. Campertown autocratic and domineering would hardly class him so if they could have seen how his lips trembled, and how his hand shook as he laid it on Hugh's shoulder.

"My boy," he said earnestly, "do your best to find Reuben. He is the light of my life, and it would cut me to the heart if any ill befel him. The sheriff made a mistake when he spoke about that reward to you. It applied only to others. I do not promise *you* any cash reward if you succeed; but anything you ask of me I will grant; for I know that you will not be unreasonable!"

There was a meaning back of those words, and Hugh knew it. He believed Mr. Campertown realized the scout master was deeply interested in the welfare of those people in the wretched hovels of the foreign settlement; and it must be that he wanted Hugh to feel that he stood ready to do the right thing by them if only this load could be taken from his heart.

"All right, sir; we'll try the best we know how to find Reuben. It will be strange if a

dozen and more scouts can't get on track of him. I give you my promise we will do everything in our power to succeed; and that's all I can say, sir."

Mr. Campertown squeezed his hand convulsively, cast an appealing look around at the circle of boyish faces, and then followed the sheriff off, doubtless returning to the plant in hopes that some good news had come to light during their brief absence.

Immediately the scouts clustered around their leader. They had not heard all that had passed between Hugh, the sheriff, and the grief-stricken millionaire, but sufficient had come to their ears to whet their curiosity, and questions poured upon the scout master.

Hugh, knowing that the best way to satisfy his comrades was to tell the whole story as briefly as he could, commenced to do so. They listened to him in absolute silence. No one interrupted because all were so anxious to get the facts, that they could not think of causing any unnecessary delay.

As soon as Hugh had finished there was a perfect flood of suggestions as to what ought to be done. The scout master, however, knew

that nothing would ever be accomplished unless they went at things in a systematic way. Accordingly he told Ralph, Alec and Billy to step aside so they could figure out a program.

"We mustn't go at this thing blindly," he said in the beginning, "and rush around without any method. The more haste the less speed in the end. First of all we ought to try and figure out who has carried the child off, or whether he simply strayed away as a little tot often does."

"The padrone acted as though he was mighty sure none of the strikers could have had a hand in the game, you noticed, Hugh?" remarked Billy.

"Yes, and somehow I'm ready to stake my belief on the padrone," answered Hugh. "He acts to me as if he had only the good of his people at heart. If any hotheads, as the sheriff seemed to think might be the case, have abducted the child so as to get a ransom, or make Mr. Campertown come to terms, the padrone doesn't know of it. But he means to find that out right away. I could see it in his eyes as he hurried off. Ralph, what makes you

so uneasy, you've got something on your mind?"

"Well, that's what I have, Hugh," admitted the other. "The fact is, I believe I know who's stolen little Reuben!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NURSE JONES MAKES AN APPEAL.

"Gee! that's talking some, Ralph!" exclaimed Billy. "Hit it up, then, and tell us who's the guilty party. It's going to make our job a whole lot easier if we know who we're chasing after right in the start."

"Yes, Ralph," added Alec, impatiently, "put us on the track, if you know so much. I hope it isn't the old padrone, after all."

Hugh looked fixedly at Ralph. He suddenly remembered a conversation they had not long before. It flashed through his mind that Ralph must be referring to the subject of that talk when he so positively declared he knew who was guilty of abducting the little boy.

So Hugh simply held up his right hand with three fingers extended; and when the other scout saw this he nodded his head.

"That's it, Hugh; you take my word for it; those three ugly guards who came sneaking back made this grand-stand play. We were off

our base when we thought they just meant to break into the safe in the plant and get something that was kept there. They knew a better way to strike for a big sum; they guessed Mr. Campertown valued Reuben higher than anything he might keep locked up in that safe. What d'ye say, am I hewing close to the line or not?"

"You've given me something to think about, Ralph, I own up," the scout master admitted, with a serious look on his face.

"There were three of them near the works," Ralph explained to Alec and Billy. "I saw the sly bunch, and dropped in a patch of brush to watch. They acted suspicious, and when I reported to Hugh here we had an idea they might mean to get even for being turned adrift by breaking in to-night and looting the safe of the plant. But, say, they had a game up their sleeve worth ten of that, believe me!"

Billy and Alec were visibly impressed with the force of Ralph's argument. It sounded reasonable to them.

"Of course the guards went away feeling sore," ventured Alec, who had a great habit of arguing to himself in a convincing manner,

"because they lost a well-paid job. Besides, they are known to the sheriff, and stand a chance of being arrested for willful murder, in case any of these people should die. Yes, I guess they would feel pretty desperate, and the three who came back must have planned some bold game. Ralph, you're a credit to the troop!"

Ralph was waiting to hear what Hugh would have to say. Others might "render their tribute due to Cæsar," but until the scout master approved, Ralph would not feel satisfied.

Hugh had meanwhile revolved the idea in his active mind. He saw it looked not only possible but probable that Ralph had hit on the truth.

"Even if they have taken the boy, as you think, Ralph," he now said, "their motive is not bound to be just what you hint. They may not mean to hold him for ransom; that is a pretty risky thing to do, and the punishment for kidnapping a child is pretty severe, you remember, nowadays."

"But what else could they mean to do, Hugh?" asked Ralph, puzzled.

"If they could make it look as if some of the

strikers had stolen the boy," continued the scout master, "Mr. Campertown would be sorry he had discharged those guards. It may be they intend to suddenly come rushing in with the child, and claim they rescued him from a bunch of the foreigners, after a warm fight, showing a few slashes in their clothes as evidence of how desperately they battled to take the boy away from the rascals!"

"Whew! that would be a smart trick, now, I should say!" remarked Alec; "but no matter what their game may be, it's up to us to get a move on and find the trail."

"To do that we've got to go over to the plant first of all, and learn just where the boy was seen last," Hugh told them.

"Once we strike footprints," said Ralph positively, "leave it to us to keep on the track."

"I wish we had a good dog along with us," ventured Billy; but he was immediately frowned upon by Ralph and Alec.

"Scouts who know their business have no need of hounds that I can see," the former told him. "Show me plain signs, and I'll take you to the end of the trail or know the reason why."

"Well, don't let's stand around here any longer, anyway," Billy returned to say, unable to take up the plain dare there seemed to be in Ralph's last remark.

"Do we all go along, Hugh?" asked Alec.

"I think a couple ought to stay here in the camp to look after things while the rest are away," replied the scout master, and then, after glancing around at the eager faces of his comrades he continued: "Harold and Monkey Stallings can be the camp guards. I've heard both of them complain of their feet hurting lately, and there may be heaps of walking to do."

The pair indicated looked very much disappointed; still they were too well drilled to raise any objection to the decree. Hugh was their leader, and when he gave an order their duty was only to obey without questioning the motive or the justness of his decision.

That is one of the things scouts learn—obedience to orders. It is a splendid foundation for their future guidance in life. If they could point to this as the only achievement of scoutcraft there would be a good excuse for the perpetuation of the organization on the

ground of having improved boy character; but of course there are dozens of other reasons to show that this movement is the grandest thing that has ever been known in connection with the rising generation.

Hugh was now ready to lead his comrades on to the cement works, in hopes of picking up a clue that would put them on the track. It was fated, however, that there should be further delay, and connected with it another surprise calculated to give them something of a shock.

As the scout master turned around he was made aware of the fact that Nurse Jones had not taken her departure at the time the sheriff and Mr. Campertown hastened away. Although he had not paid any attention to her up to now, she had apparently hovered close by the boys, listening to all that was said, and showing the most intense interest in what went on.

When Hugh happened to discover her, just after laying his plans with the three chums who had been at his elbow, Nurse Jones made straight toward him.

"I hope you will let me go with you when

you start off on this hunt for the lost child, Mr. Scout Master?" she said, earnestly.

The boys exchanged looks. It was a novel request, and Hugh hardly knew how to answer her. Nurse Jones meant well, but then a woman was hardly fitted for enduring the fatigue they might have to encounter when chasing all around the country in search of the daring abductors of little Reuben.

Nurses were all right in their places, but it hardly seemed as though one of them should want to keep company with scouts when they were on dangerous duty.

"I hate to refuse you, Nurse Jones," Hugh finally said, "but we don't know just where we will have to go. The distance may be too far for you."

"But I'm a famous walker, you remember. I've made it a practice to cover ten miles every day, and often twice that," she replied.

Alec snickered at that, for he could see that none of the scouts had anything on Nurse Jones when it came to endurance.

"And then," continued Hugh, "there's likely to be danger, because if desperate men have

kidnapped Reuben, they will hardly give him up without trouble."

"That is only another argument in favor of my going with you," the nurse told him. "In our profession we understand we are bound to incur some peril; and, if there should be fighting of any kind a nurse would be in her element binding up the wounds that followed. You must let me go with you, Hugh. Indeed, I will not be refused."

The other boys could see that Hugh was "taking water," as some of them called it; that is, his resolution seemed shaken. While he still objected, he did not appear very firm.

"But why should you want to tag along, Nurse Jones, when all the rest of us are boys used to taking hard knocks? You've got some reason for doing this; don't you think you ought to tell us?"

"Whew!" Alec could be heard saying, half under his breath, for he understood what it was Hugh must be figuring on.

The nurse stood there, as if half hesitating. Then, as though suddenly making up her mind, she turned again to Hugh.

"Yes, it is only fair that I should be taking

you all into my confidence, for, after you hear what I have to say, I feel sure none of you can deny me the right to join in the search for my own little cousin!"

Alec acted as though ready to drop to the ground with astonishment. While he and Hugh had decided that there was something peculiar about the actions of Nurse Jones, and that she looked on Mr. Campertown and his grandson as anything but strangers, they had really never gone so far as to figure that there was actual relationship existing between them.

"Yes," the Red Cross nurse continued hastily, as though now that she had lifted the veil of secrecy she wanted it over with as soon as possible, "I am his grandchild, just as truly as little Reuben, although he has really never set eyes on me before."

"Then your name isn't Jones?" asked Hugh, though he hardly knew why he should have made the remark, except that he felt compelled to say something.

"No, it is Campertown, but when I took up the profession of trained nurse, for reasons of my own I chose to be known as Maude Jones. My father was the oldest son of Mr. Camper-

town. It was the same old story of his marrying a girl his father did not approve of, so he was cut off, and has never seen his father from that day to this—over twenty-three years ago. My father is still alive, though in poor health. He lives in modest rooms in Boston, and part of my pay goes to his support. Now, you know my secret, and surely you will not deny my right to be with you in the search for my own little cousin."

"When you came out here in the ambulance did you know that the plant where the strike was going on belonged to Mr. Campertown?" asked Hugh.

"I learned it while on the way," she answered, readily enough, "from Dr. Richter, who had been told about the facts; but it was too late for me to turn back, even if I had wanted to. To tell you the truth I did not think of doing so. A sudden curiosity had possessed me to see with my own eyes what my stern grandfather looked like."

"Do you mean that you have never seen him even once?" asked Alec, amazed.

"My father is very proud, even though poor," she told him, with a dignity that im-

pressed the boys. "He has always said that he had done nothing wrong, and would never beg his father to forgive him. If there ever was to be any reconciliation it must come from the other side. And so I was forbidden to ever try and appeal to Reuben Campertown. I mean to continue to obey his wishes, though I hope something may happen to change things. It is a terrible thing to have family quarrels; and really he didn't look so *very* terrible just now when he was here."

Remembering the look of woe on the face of the millionaire, Hugh felt that she was putting it very mildly when she said this. Oppressed with a sense of dread concerning the fate of the child he loved so passionately, Mr. Campertown had really looked like a man who would not have harmed a fly if he could help it.

"And now, am I to accompany you boys, Mr. Scout Master?" asked Nurse Jones.

"I guess you've proved your right to go along with us," Hugh told her; and every fellow nodded in vigorous assent when he said this, for they liked Nurse Jones.

CHAPTER IX.

SURPRISING THE SHERIFF.

"That settles it, then," Hugh told them all, "so let's be off."

"Just give us a minute, please, Hugh," interposed Alec. "I want to carry along a fine club I've got in the tent here."

"And if Monkey Stallings will lend me that electric torch he brought with him I might find a chance to make good use of the same," observed Ralph who, being the best trailer in the whole troop, anticipated that much would be expected of him in the present crisis.

"Sure I will, Ralph," replied Monkey Stallings. "There's a brand new battery in the torch, too, so it ought to last you a good while. I'll get it right away."

A few of the other fellows were also bustling around. Perhaps they thought it best to arm and equip themselves with staves or cudgels as a means of defense, should they come in contact with the three desperate guards.

Scouts may be debarred from handling fire-arms as a general practice, but occasions are apt to arise where they are compelled to defend themselves; and at such times a club is a pretty good thing to have in hand.

This took but a few minutes. Hugh was getting impatient to be off, for he considered that they had already wasted enough time. The trail would be getting colder all the while; and besides, they would still have to pick up some points over at the plant.

Finally they were all ready, and a glance at their eager faces spoke volumes for the willing spirit with which those scouts entered into this game of trying to recover the lost boy.

Harold Tremaine and Monkey Stallings, with rueful looks, saw their comrades depart. They were undoubtedly keenly disappointed. Smothering this feeling as best they could they called out after the party:

"Here's wishing you and Nurse Jones the best of luck!"

She waved her hand back at them. It must have pleased her to know that these happy-go-lucky scouts had already become quite fond of her in the short time they were favored with

her acquaintance. Friends were not so plentiful in her sad experience that she could afford to despise the honest interest these lads were taking in her fortunes.

Hugh remembered that he had made out the time as about nine o'clock just before the unexpected coming of the sheriff and Mr. Campertown with their startling news.

Not that the scout master carried a watch with him, or had even asked one of the others to inform him as to the time. A scout's clock is usually in the heavens. If he has learned his lesson properly he is able to tell pretty accurately, in case the sky is clear, what hour of the day or night it may chance to be.

This is only done by making himself familiar with the positions of the various heavenly bodies, the sun by day, the moon and planets by night. In time he knows just by taking a rapid survey of the blue vault above him how the night goes, for he has become aware that this star or that one will be in a certain position, behind the western horizon at twelve, one, two or three o'clock.

If the disappearance of the little fellow was discovered about dark, as they had been given

to understand, that would mean an hour or more had since elapsed.

Hugh went even further and figured that the abductors would hardly try to do their work until the shades of evening had commenced to gather, so they might slip away without being detected.

The boys were already at the works now, having skirted the settlement on the way, and noticed that there was renewed excitement as the padrone started the inmates to scouring the immediate vicinity in search of traces of the missing child. Hugh could see that the women who wore those bright-colored handkerchiefs about their heads seemed to be most in evidence, nor did he wonder at this; since they had children of their own, ragged and dirty-faced, but nevertheless precious to them, and they could therefore feel for the stricken millionaire.

"They've forgotten just now all they suffered at his hands, I do believe," Nurse Jones was saying in the ear of the scout master, for she persisted in tripping along close to Hugh.

"It seems so," the boy replied; "and I hope Mr. Campertown will not forget the fact,

either. If we have the good luck to fetch Reuben back, I'm going to hold him to the promise he made us; and I know what it is I mean to ask him to do."

"I think I can give a good guess, Hugh," Nurse Jones murmured. "I wish to say that the thought does you credit. I only hope and pray we may find the child, and that he can be taken back unharmed. I believe it will be a turning point in the life of that stern old man. It's a lesson he's been in need of——"

Now that they had reached the stockade around the cement works, they found, as upon the occasion of their other visit, that some of the sheriff's posse stood on guard.

Apparently they had received their orders not to debar any of the scouts from entering as they pleased, for when Hugh started to pass through the gate there was no remonstrance made.

"What d'ye reckon Hugh means to do here, Billy?" whispered Whistling Smith, as with all the others he passed inside the building that had been without workers for so long a time now.

"Why, here's where the little chap was when

last seen," explained Billy; "and to get on his track we've had to come here. If we only had a dog now, one of the right kind that's accustomed to following a scent, a hound like they use to hunt escaped convicts from the turpentine camps down South, all we would have to do would be to let the dog sniff at some article of clothing worn by the kid. After that he'd pick out the trail, just by his sense of smell, and lead us straight to the spot."

"But Ralph is a crackerjack of a trailer, you remember, Billy," said Whistling Smith; "and he's bound to do his level best this time."

"Oh! I reckon Ralph is as good a hand as any ordinary scout can be," Billy admitted. "I've been reading lots lately about what wonderful things those smart tracking hounds have been known to do; and, say, I'd just like to see some of it with my own eyes. But then we'll stand back of Ralph, and help out all we can."

Considering that Billy was not known to be much of a hand at reading signs and following a trail through brush and over hills this was very condescending on his part. No doubt

Ralph would have felt greatly encouraged could he have heard the noble resolve.

Ralph at that moment was busily engaged. With Hugh he had sought the offices of the plant, thinking that the sheriff might be found there, if he were still about the buildings. It proved to be a good guess, for they did discover both the sheriff and Mr. Campertown, the latter looking more dejected than ever, which was ample proof that thus far no signs had been found of the strangely missing child.

At the entrance of the two scouts, Mr. Campertown started and looked eagerly toward them as though a sudden wild hope had seized upon him. When he saw who the newcomers were, and realized that they could not have any glad tidings for him as yet, he heaved a great sigh and sank back again in his chair.

Perhaps he and the sheriff may have been consulting on some plan. If so, they immediately put it out of their heads at the coming of Hugh and Ralph.

"Are you ready to begin on the job now, boys?" asked the officer kindly, yet with a touch of half-veiled sarcasm in his voice, as though, after all, he had grave doubts as to

the lads being able to undertake the successful carrying out of such a task as now lay before them.

"We wanted to ask a few questions first, sir, and then make our start from here," the scout master informed him.

"That sounds like business, anyway," the sheriff observed, "and I suppose it is about the boy last being seen you want to know?"

"For one thing, yes," Hugh told him.

"I'll try and give you the few facts we've dug out so far," said the big official. "I have two of my men who used to be on the police force in Boston working on the case. You'll have to take care, or they'll cut the ground out from under the feet of the scouts."

"It wouldn't make any difference to us if they did," said the scout master; "our only idea is to find the child, and so long as that's done, it doesn't matter who has the luck to bring him back. Please tell us what you've found out, sir."

"The little fellow ate his supper with his grandfather at half past six. In fact, the three of us sat at that table over there, and tried to make the best of the meal they prepared for

us here in the plant. It's been the habit of little Reuben to be put to bed early, and so Mr. Campertown took him off immediately we were done. Why, the kid was that sleepy he went off while we sat here at the table, and the last I saw of him he was lying like a log in his grandfather's arms."

Mr. Campertown barely suppressed a groan. The recollection evidently came near overpowering him, so that it was only with an effort he shut his jaws tightly and held his feelings in with a tight rein.

"An hour or so afterward, about eight it was, and just dark," continued the sheriff, "Mr. Campertown had occasion to go again to the room over yonder, where you see that partly open door. There had been a couple of cots arranged for himself and the child, the rest of us meaning to bunk in other parts of the plant. Well, I heard him give a cry, and he came staggering out, looking as white as a ghost, and trying to tell me that the boy was gone."

"Whew! that *was* exciting," Ralph could not help saying when the sheriff paused to catch his breath, for he was a large man, and talking was not his strongest point.

"Of course I hurried in," the official went on, "and found a window wide open, showing where the abductor had entered. We had heard no sound while we sat here, which proved that the man or men had worked with expedition and great caution, not even arousing the child. That's about the extent of our information, son. Whoever the contemptible scoundrel was, he left no card behind him with his signature."

"It happened between seven and eight, then, according to what you say, Mr. Sheriff?" Hugh ventured to say, as though that fact might be worth remembering later on.

"That's a certainty, son. The main thing, though, is the fact that they took the kid out through the window without my men being any the wiser. Then there was the stockade to consider; they must have known where a weak place could be found in that."

"If they were on guard here for days and weeks they would be apt to know every foot of the place, don't you think?" asked Hugh boldly, so that the sheriff stared at him, and then exclaimed:

"What does this stand for? Have you

lighted on a clue already that my men missed? Why do you speak of those guards we sent packing? What have they got to do with this kidnapping game, son?"

"Only that my chum Ralph, here, saw three of them sneaking around in the brush outside the picket lines in the afternoon," Hugh informed the astonished officer. "He watched them a while, and from their actions felt that they were up to some mischief. We talked it over, and wondered if they had designs on the safe here; but, since you and your strong posse were on duty, we concluded that it was none of our business, and that we wouldn't be thanked if we tried to give you a tip; so we kept still. But, after we learned that a treasure many times more valuable than any in the safe had been stolen, we saw a great light."

Then the sheriff, still staring at Hugh, slapped his hand down on his thigh, and was heard to mutter, as if to himself:

"By George! It begins to strike me there may be something after all to that talk about the clever way these scouts do their work. I'm getting my eyes opened!"

CHAPTER X.

ON THE TRAIL.

"Could we look into the room where the boy was asleep at the time he was stolen?" asked Hugh; and the sheriff at once manifested a desire to lead the way, Mr. Campertown following after them slowly, as though it pained him to see the empty cot upon which little Reuben had been left lying.

It was not much of a room, after all, and had only one window. The boys did not bother asking what it had been originally used for in connection with the offices of the big works; that was a matter that apparently had no connection with the present.

Just as the sheriff had told them, two cots were in evidence. One of these was still undisturbed, and had evidently been intended for the use of the millionaire when he chose to retire, after concluding to remain on his property for a night, now that the authorities had taken charge.

"This is the cot where the boy lay," the sheriff told them, at the same time pointing to the second bed, where the sheet and blanket had been thrown aside, and it could be seen that a small head had pressed on the pillow.

Hugh and Ralph just glanced around them, and then turned their gaze on the one window the room could boast. It was open, as they had already been advised. After securing possession of the child, the unknown kidnappers had not thought it worth while to try and hide the route by which they had entered and left the room.

Ralph stepped over at once to that window. Leaning across the sill, he undoubtedly must have pressed the button of the hand electric torch he had borrowed from a brother scout, for a little glow could be seen without.

Hugh knew what this meant. The tracker of animals was looking for signs of the invaders. If the ground beneath the window happened to be in any way soft, they must have left some sort of trail behind them that would give a clue.

Ralph turned his head so that he could speak to the scout master. He seemed to understand

that Hugh would be hovering close behind him, anxious to hear his opinion.

"Yes, there are marks below, Hugh; and we can climb out here much easier than bothering to go around," was what Ralph said eagerly, for he was like a hound being held in the leash when scenting the game, and those marks beyond the window seemed to be beckoning to him to come on and investigate.

"All right," said Hugh, promptly, "tumble out, and I'll be with you in a jiffy."

Not waiting for further permission, Ralph made his way through the opening. To an agile scout it was merely next to nothing, for the ground lay only a few feet below the window.

Hugh followed after him, to hear a quick warning:

"Wait, don't drop just there, Hugh; you'll spoil the best of the tracks. Reach around and get your foot on this board; now swing around, and there you are!"

No sooner had the scout master effected a landing than the two boys were bending over, with the shaft of white light from the hand torch illuminating the earth directly under the

window. From the opening above them two heads were thrust—those of the deeply interested sheriff and the anxious millionaire, who were watching to ascertain what was about to happen.

Ralph was pointing to certain marks, and calling the attention of his comrade to the fact that they differed from others.

"Remember that footprint with the square toe, Hugh; that's one man's trademark. Now, here's a second that's entirely different; this fellow wears a pointed shoe, you see, and is more of a dude than the first. Now, if I could only find—well, talk about luck, will you—look at this! A third footprint, and as different from both the other as black is from white."

"Ralph, you're right," assented the pleased scout master, "that man is wearing old shoes, and one of them seems to have a torn sole, for it makes a queer mark every time he puts a foot down. See here, and here, you can notice it."

"One, two, three, all told," said Ralph, with thrilling emphasis. "Hugh, doesn't that just seem to fit in with my theory to a dot?"

"There were that many of the ugly guards came back, for a fact," admitted Hugh.

"I've settled that part of it without a question," said the other boy firmly; "and now the things we've still got to figure out are, what object these desperate men had in view when they stole the boy; and how can we find them?"

"Good for you, son!" chuckled the interested sheriff, leaning from the open window. "I want to say that this is worth all the trip out here to learn. My two men never bothered looking for tracks; they asked some questions, and then went hurrying off, saying they believed they knew where the dagoes had taken the boy. I wouldn't be surprised if they're wasting their time over at the settlement rummaging around."

Neither of the boys took much notice of this praise from the sheriff. The fact of the matter was they were too deeply engrossed in the carrying out of their plan of campaign to bother with side issues. After it was all over, no doubt, they might feel highly gratified to hear such expressions of appreciation from an officer of the law.

"I'll step around and fetch the rest of the

boys," suggested Hugh, "while you're making a start along the trail, Ralph."

"Wish you would, Hugh," muttered the other, already moving off, and bending low, as he followed the tracks with his practised eye.

So the scout master speedily appeared in the midst of the other members of the troop, who, with Nurse Jones, had been impatiently waiting just outside the office. Of course all of them were rather surprised when Hugh spoke, for they had believed him inside the building all this time.

"We've found the trail," he told them quickly, and thinking it best that every one should know the facts without delay, Hugh went on to add: "There were three of the abductors, just the same number of guards Ralph saw hiding in the brush and watching the plant this afternoon. Come along with me, all of you!"

"Good! We're off!" Bud Morgan was heard to mutter.

Trooping at the heels of their leader they quickly rounded the building.

"What's that moving along over there?"

asked Whistling Smith, who had suddenly discovered a strange sort of glow apparently creeping close to the ground within the stockade, and looking very uncanny.

"Why, don't you know? That's our chum, Ralph, and he's using that bully little hand torch Monkey Stallings loaned him," Billy Worth hastened to inform the other.

They soon came up with Ralph, who had stopped close to the stockade.

"Here's where they got in and out, Hugh," the tracker was saying, as he pointed to where there was a gap in the barricade, a heavy plank having been removed.

"As like as not those rascals arranged all this before they left the place," observed Hugh, as he saw the missing plank lying on the ground close by. "They figured that they'd want to come back for *something,* and this board was left hanging loosely so that, while it looked all right, it could be removed with half an effort."

There was nothing strange about the way the scout master figured this out. His training had sharpened his wits and enabled him to solve what might have been a bit of a mys-

tery to some boys. But then it is part of a scout's business to use reason and judgment, and this was what both Hugh and Ralph were doing.

"It looks more and more as if my guess had hit the bull's-eye right in the center," Ralph was saying, half to himself, in a satisfied way.

"About the three men, you mean of course, Ralph," Hugh remarked. "Yes, none of us will ever look at it any other way now. Crawl through, and we'll follow you. This is the first stage of the tracking game; if the rest pans out as well, I can see victory in the air!"

Such confident words did much to inspire all of them with renewed vigor. Looking around after they had passed beyond the stockade, the boys could see little save the gloom of the night; but the faith they felt in their leaders did much to make this seem less appalling.

In several places, though, some of them began to notice moving lights that looked like jack-o'-lanterns in a graveyard or a marsh.

"What d'ye make them out to be, Alec?" asked Blake Merton of the scout who happened to be next to him at the time.

"Why, I wouldn't be surprised if they were some of the strikers hunting all around to see if they can find the lost boy," Alec replied. "Then again it may be that several of the sheriff's posse, learning about that fat reward Mr. Campertown has offered for the safe return of little Reuben, and no questions asked, have organized a searching party. Five thousand dollars will spur most men to doing stunts, let me tell you, Blake."

"I should say, yes!" declared the other, with a sigh, as though he could picture quite a few glorious things that might come his way should a kind fortune allow him to win that prize, which, however, was too good to be true.

Meanwhile Ralph, with Hugh close beside him, was in the van, carefully following the trail. It seemed a most fortunate thing that when the abductors of the child made off, bearing their sleeping burden with them, they avoided the customary path made by the men in coming to and going from work.

This fear of meeting someone caused the three men to pass over fallow ground where their footprints were apt to be more readily seen.

As the cluster of scouts followed as close as they thought expedient, they were watching every motion of the leaders, expressing their appreciation among themselves in whispered comments.

"I guess after all, Billy, you'll admit right now our chum Ralph is as good at the business as any trail dog you could scare up!" Alec told the other.

"That's what I think, too," added Bud Morgan, with emphasis. "Just see how he keeps that eagle eye of his glued on the ground; and notice that we're moving forward right fast in the bargain."

"Ralph Kenyon is all to the good!" said another enthusiastic scout.

Of course, under all this heavy fire, Billy felt that he'd better throw up his hands and surrender.

"No use talking, fellows," he told them, "seems like we'd have mighty little use for one of those hounds as long as we've got Ralph to pin to. He's learned his lesson to a dot. Unless we meet with a setback, it's going to be all up with that crowd."

"A bunch of scouts like ours ought to be able to handle three men, I should say," ventured Tom Sherwood.

"Especially when they're likely to be cowards at heart!" added Jack Dunham.

"What makes you think that?" demanded Whistling Smith. "Seems to me Ralph said they looked like a tough lot of fellows."

"All the same," the other went on to say defiantly, as though he knew he was right, and meant to stick to his assertion, "any set of men who would steal away an innocent little chap like that Reuben, must be cowards at heart, no matter how much they try to bluster and make out to be bullies."

"Good for you, Jack," Alec Sands put in. "I back you up in saying that. When it comes to a show-down, you mark me they'll run before they think of trying to stand before our crowd."

The idea rather pleased most of the scouts. They were not inclined to be ferocious at all, though perhaps some of them would feel disappointed unless they had a chance to get at least one whack at the scoundrels who had

stolen the boy. This could be understood from the nervous manner in which they handled those various cudgels with which they had armed themselves before quitting the camp.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VALUE OF BEING PREPARED.

"We're going to find out who's swinging that lantern anyway," ventured one of the boys after a while. "Ralph's heading in that direction in a hurry."

"There's a whole pack of 'em in the bargain, at least four or five, because I c'n glimpse 'em every time the light swings back," said Jack Dunham, a bit nervously.

"Listen to the chatter, will you?" observed Alec. "That tells who they are."

"Some of the strikers, for a cookey!" added another boy.

There was a rush as the five men came up to them. Evidently the sight of that odd glow traveling over the ground had surprised and mystified them, and they were now bent on learning its origin.

Ralph at the proper time turned the little hand searchlight full upon the newcomers. It was in this way discovered that they were

undoubtedly strikers who had evidently been scouring the immediate vicinity in the hope of learning what had become of Mr. Campertown's grandchild.

"There's the old padrone at their head!" ejaculated Alec.

"Wonder if Hugh means to tell them to fall in with us?" suggested Arthur Cameron.

"Oh, my goodness, I hope not!" muttered Billy Worth, who for some reason of his own seemed to prefer that the strikers keep their distance, and to leeward at that. The padrone had by this time discovered who it was influenced that queer light to skim along so close to the ground. Hugh, on his part, was pleased to see that the old fellow had been doing everything in his power to fulfill his contract with regard to trying to find the missing child.

"Don't stop, Ralph," he told the tracker hurriedly.

"Shunt them off on a side trail, Hugh!" whispered the anxious Billy. "We ought to be crowd enough ourselves to do the business if ever we come up with those three."

Hugh managed to do this without hurting the feelings of the padrone. It only required

a little tact to accomplish the thing. He suggested that the strikers could cover the ground in one district while the scouts carried out their own plans. The padrone understood, because he and his men drifted off again on the hunt, for they spread out like an open fan as they went.

Billy chuckled as though he felt relieved.

"Thank goodness for that!" he observed. "I can breathe easy again. Not but that the padrone means honest, and his men seem to be all right; but their ways ain't our ways, you know; and, well, I won't say any more because I want to be fair."

"What's happened now, I wonder?" asked Whistling Smith, when they saw that the two in the van had come to a sudden pause.

Hugh turned to the rest of the eager party hovering around.

"Ralph says that right here he can see where the man who had been carrying the child turned and gave his burden into the charge of the fellow wearing the torn shoe" was what he told them, much to their wonder and delight.

"That's going some," said the admiring

Alec. "Think of him being able to read signs just as easy as we might a page in a book. If any Indian, or that old hunter in Cooper's Leatherstocking tales, could beat our chum, I'll eat my hat."

When the forward movement was resumed they were all feeling more satisfied than ever that it would come out right. Difficulties might, and doubtless would, continue to arise and confront them, but so long as they had such a clever comrade glued to the trail, these must in turn be brushed aside.

Yes, the scent of victory seemed to be in the air for those scouts; it invigorated them beyond measure, and made the labor of that night tramp seem like play.

A quarter of an hour afterward and Ralph announced that the third member of the fugitives had taken the boy, still asleep, and perhaps drugged so that he might not betray them by any crying spell brought about by fright.

"That eases my mind a whole lot," Bud Morgan remarked; "because do you know I was afraid that fellow, with that torn sole on his shoe, might trip and hurt Reuben. But he didn't, or else Ralph would have told us so.

It's all right, and things are working for us to beat the band."

In fact, it was an object lesson to some of the scouts to see how cleverly Ralph managed to read those signs. Those, who up to then had not taken a great deal of interest in such things, began to realize that they were missing one of the best traditions of scoutcraft; and no doubt were taking mental resolutions that from that time on they would turn over new leaves.

They had by now gone more than a mile from the cement plant, and still the trail beckoned them on. Hugh had given it as his opinion that the three abductors must certainly be heading for some place previously selected as a hide-out.

"I base that belief on several things," he explained, when they had halted for Ralph to rest his strained eyes a minute or two. "In the first place they've been hitting it up in an almost direct line. If they had been simply bent on putting as much ground as they could between themselves and the sheriff's posse, they would have been apt to turn to the right

or to the left from time to time as if uncertain which way to go. Am I right, Ralph?"

"It sounds good to me, Hugh," came the ready response to his question.

"Another thing," continued the scout master, always willing to pass around any knowledge he might possess, "it isn't likely these desperate men would go into a game like this without laying all their plans beforehand. They take a lot of risk as it is, because kidnapping a child is a felony that calls for twenty years in the penitentiary."

Ralph, being rested, evinced a desire to once more take up his onerous duties, and so the little heart-to-heart talk ended for the time being. Such things as these, however, were apt to arouse an additional interest in the minds of lagging scouts, and cause them to watch Ralph's movements with more concern than ever.

That first mile began to lengthen until some of them felt it must surely be double that distance they had passed over. Still not one complaint had been uttered or a sigh heard.

Nurse Jones seemed to be able to hold her own with the best of them. Apparently it had

been no idle boast on her part when she told Hugh she made it a practice to walk ten miles every day and frequently double that far. At that rate, there was really more danger of some of the boys dropping out than of Nurse Jones failing in her self-imposed task.

More than once some of the scouts secretly told each other that she was a "wonder," and this might be reckoned high praise, coming from boys who, proud of their own accomplishments along the line of extended hikes, were apt to look down contemptuously on such feeble efforts as their sisters among the Camp-fire Girls might attempt.

It had been remarked that not once had they approached a human habitation. From this fact they could understand that the three men meant to avoid from being seen as much as was possible while heading for their destination.

Hugh was satisfied with the way things were going. For a little while he had secretly confessed at being worried; that was when he feared the men might be making for some station on the railroad; because once they managed to reach a city, the difficulty of finding

them would be increased many fold. Scouts are more at home in the great open than on stone pavements, where most of their knowledge of woodcraft would be wasted.

This was of the past now, for the country seemed to be getting more and more lonely as they continued to advance.

Sometimes Ralph met trouble and had to bring his reserve stock of cunning into play before he was able to go on. This generally happened at places where the nature of the ground made the trail almost indistinguishable to the human eye. Perhaps, at such times, Billy Worth might have been caught wishing once more that they had a dog along with the ability to follow a scent; for such an acquisition to their force would have solved these riddles faster than Ralph was able to.

Nevertheless, in every instance, the delay was only temporary, and each in turn served to impress more firmly upon the minds of the boys the great lesson of preparedness they were learning.

Only for Ralph's taking such pains to study up along these lines they would be finding themselves hopelessly beaten in the endeavor

to track down the abductors of little Reuben.

"I wonder if they mean to keep on going all night long?" Blake Merton remarked to the boy on his left, when there could be no doubt about their having covered a good two and a half miles.

"Well, we ought to be as able to keep it going as long as those men," said Tom Sherwood. "What's the use of scouts training at long-distance walking, mountain climbing, and all that sort of thing, if they can't beat out a pack of men who have never practised such stunts?"

Apparently there was no answer to that query; at least Blake Merton did not appear to find any, for he relapsed into silence.

All this occurred while they had been surrounded by darkness. What lay beyond they could only guess at; except when the outlines of tree-tops were seen against the sky there was no means of telling where the horizon lay.

Far in the distance they saw lights from time to time, but as they progressed further along on their journey even these failed to show. This would seem to indicate that the country must be getting more and more lonely.

"It's a hide-out they're making for, Hugh," Ralph declared for the third time. "We're going to strike pay-dirt sooner or later. And right now, if you look ahead, you can see a dim sort of light. I wouldn't be much surprised if that was it!"

When the other boys heard this assertion made, they quickened their pace in a perceptible degree; their actions were much more lively, and it could be seen that the pursuit had taken on new vim.

As they drew steadily closer to the dim light they found reason to believe that Ralph was stating the truth when he predicted speedy success.

"It seems to be coming from a window, like there might be a shack of some kind there!" one scout ventured, in a whisper.

"Why, look here, will you, we've struck a road!" observed another, exercising the same amount of caution.

"But it's an old and abandoned one, let me tell you, Billy. See how the grass has grown all over it. They must have built a new road some years ago, and left this one high and dry. That house ahead of us, where the light comes

from, was once facing on this same road, and now it's left high and dry."

"I tell you what," Billy declared, "it must have been abandoned by the people who lived there when the old road was given up. They moved to new quarters; and these men, looking around for a good hiding-place, located this shack."

Hugh at that point asked the others not to even whisper any longer.

"We've marked this spot so we could find it again if we wanted to," he explained to them. "You notice that Ralph isn't using his torch any more. He thinks it might be dangerous if anyone happened to be looking this way."

"And do we creep up so as to take a peek in at the shack then, Hugh?" asked Billy.

"Yes, that's the program," the scout master told them. "Remember, everybody, not to speak a word unless you're forced to, and then let it be as soft as the night wind whispering through the leaves. Come on!"

They were wild with eagerness as they obeyed their leader. Each scout mentally resolved that it would not be set down at his door if their finely-laid plans missed connec-

tions, and success failed to reward their efforts.

In this way, then, they moved along, and drew close up to the house on the abandoned public highway, from which that light shone dimly through the dirty window sash.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE END OF THE TRAIL.

Hugh had already learned the nature of the building upon which they had come while following the trail of the three disgruntled former guards who had been let go when the sheriff took charge of affairs in the strike zone.

It was an old, tumbledown structure, and, from what he could see of it in the semi-darkness of the night, the scout master believed it had formerly been used as a residence and blacksmith shop combined.

At some time in the dim past, no doubt, the brawny smith who dwelt there had made a fair living by handling his share of the traffic of wagons that rumbled past the place. The building of the new road had left him high and dry, so that it became necessary for him to seek another location, perhaps at some crossroads, in order to continue his vocation.

Of course all this just flashed through the

mind of the scout master when he saw what manner of building it was they had come upon. He could not spare the time at present to look into it any deeper. There was work to be done, and, if they hoped to come out of this affair with credit to themselves as worthy scouts, they must devote their entire time and attention to the task in hand.

First of all they wished to ascertain who was inside that old ramshackle building where the elements had played at hide-and-seek, no doubt, for many a year after its abandonment as a habitation and bustling place of business.

To accomplish this they crept toward the window where that dim light shone through the dusty window-panes. Miraculous to relate, these still remained whole, perhaps because there had come along no lively boy capable of hurling a stone with accurate aim.

In cases of this kind, when the scouts were out in force, they had a systematic way of doing things. Those who were recognized as their leaders must be accorded the first privilege. Consequently there was no jostling and crowding now, as they made toward that coveted place of observation. While every fel-

low would be glad of a chance to see, he was ready to await his turn, if need be.

It was with considerable eagerness that Hugh and Ralph, having been given first chance by virtue of their recent labors, raised their heads and glued their eyes to the soiled glass.

Only by means of this close contact were they able to see at all through the small and almost opaque window panes. Several candles were burning on a table. These had been placed in as many bottles to serve in place of candlesticks, of which there was apparently a dearth in the old place.

The window belonged to a room adjoining the shed where in past days the smith had had his forge and conducted his horseshoeing business. It may have served as a combined dining and sitting-room in those happy times; but, if so, it must have been a rather dismal place. Still, there were two other windows the boys noticed, though they had wooden shutters closed on them. The third one had been torn from its moorings in some wild gale, and lay on the ground in fragments, which was

possibly the reason the last window had not also been screened.

Except a rickety little table, not worth taking away, and a bench, there was not a single article of furniture in the room. But then, what more could hardly be expected in connection with a long-ago, abandoned house?

It told Hugh that those who were now occupying the place did not expect to stay there, and had no means of making themselves even halfway comfortable.

Having found a section in the lower part of the pane where there chanced to be a little less grime than usual, he was now able to see better. There were moving figures in the room, one, two, yes, three of them. They were all men, and this must have struck Hugh as a most suggestive fact, since they had been following a trio of fugitives for the last hour and a half, perhaps more.

Ralph was feeling for his ear, and, understanding that the other wished to whisper something, the scout master bent his head lower.

"It's them!" was all Ralph spoke, but it was quite enough.

Hugh did not need to cudgel his brains to understand to what the other was referring. He knew Ralph, in some way, recognized the men inside the deserted smithy as the trio of guards who had come back after being dismissed by the sheriff. Hugh guessed from this that Ralph must have found a much cleaner section of window pane than it had been his luck to run across.

Hugh again tried to discover what the inmates of the room were doing, for he had before that seen them moving around as though busily engaged; and, even the sound of heavy voices, accompanied by hoarse laughter, had drifted to his ears.

At first Hugh was puzzled to account for the apparently strange act of two of the men who were moving about. He saw them open bundles they had doubtless carried with them to the old building. These seemed to contain clothes, for they held them up. They also made some sort of comment, as though inviting the criticism of the third man, who was smoking a pipe and taking it easy, sitting on the bench, with one foot raised, and his back against the wall.

It would appear as though the men might be thinking of opening an old clothes shop, for all that they took out of the bundles looked dilapidated. Hugh could not be quite sure, but somehow it struck him that he had seen just such clothes among the foreign workers.

When he saw one of the men hold up a colored handkerchief, such as the women belonging to the strikers universally wore, his suspicions became a conviction. There was a deep and dark design in what the two men were engaged in doing; it was not the idle horseplay it might appear on the surface.

Hugh remembered of lately reading how unscrupulous prospectors have many times been known to "salt" a mine deemed worthless, so that it could be sold to some innocent, trusting Eastern capitalist. Well, these rascals were doing something of the same sort then and there, only in this case it was their design to unload the entire ignominy of the evil deed they had just carried out on to the shoulders of the wretched strikers.

They had managed to secure some of the garments belonging in the foreign settlement, perhaps by raiding a clothes line; and these

garments they meant to scatter about the place. When, later, directed by some clue over the wire, perhaps, the authorities hurried to the old smithy and found the stolen child there, they would never have a single doubt but that the place had been occupied by a party of foreigners, and in this way the crime would be laid at the door of the strikers who had reason to hate Mr. Campertown.

It was a miserable sort of game, Hugh thought, as he continued to watch the way the three hilarious ex-guards were carrying on, all of them having perhaps been drinking more than was good for them, as there were flasks in sight on the table.

He could not understand just how they expected to profit by the deal; but possibly they had this all planned out; or it might be that revenge was all they wanted, which was meant to fall heavily upon both the strikers and the millionaire.

Hugh had seen quite enough. He believed the child was in that other room beyond the door he had noticed in the wall. Several times he had discovered one of the men pointing in that direction, as though he might be referring

to the innocent object of their treacherous raid.

Hugh backed away and allowed others to take his place, so that by degrees all of the scouts could feel that they had been given a fair show.

The next thing was how to go about the task of frightening the three men off, and preventing them from carrying the child in addition. Hugh was figuring all this over in his mind as he waited for the last detachment to creep up and take a look through the grimy window panes.

Of course, there need be no great effort made to come in contact with the desperate trio. Their capture was not so much what the scouts were after as the recovery of the child.

That was why Hugh began figuring in his mind upon a little scheme by means of which he believed they might beat the enemy at their own game. If these men could crawl through a convenient window and run away with the boy, possibly the resourceful scouts might adopt the same stratagem with a chance for success.

Was there a window to the other room, and, if so, would they find it fastened up by a bar-

ricade in the shape of a heavy wooden shutter? The thought had hardly appealed to Hugh before he was drawing Ralph with him around the corner.

"What's the game now?" whispered that surprised scout, though he did not offer the slightest objection to being towed along, for he felt sure Hugh had hit on some clever device that might lead to the confusion of the foe.

"I'm looking for a window," replied the other, as near his ear as it was possible for him to place his lips. "One opening into that other room. I think the boy must be in there. We can give them tit for tat if it's possible to get inside and carry off the child."

"But, Hugh, don't you believe they're meaning to abandon him, after setting that trap with all those dago things?" asked Ralph, proving that he, as well as the scout master, had guessed the true reason for the actions of the men.

"Yes, it looks like it, but I'm afraid they may change their minds. 'A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush,' Ralph."

"Guess you're right, Hugh; do whatever

you think is best," was what Ralph told the scout leader.

It generally happened that way. Hugh's plans appealed to his chums in an irresistible fashion. If there was some honest opposition at first, it usually gave way after he had disclosed his hand, and shown the real value of his idea.

The window was soon found, and, as Hugh expected, there was a heavy wooden shutter guarding it. At first sight this would appear to have been a serious setback to any design the scouts might entertain looking to effecting an entrance. Hugh started an immediate investigation, and a satisfied grunt told his comrade that he had made a pleasing discovery.

"I thought as much!" whispered the scout master, as he softly began to draw the wooden blind back.

Like nearly everything else about the old rookery, it was in a dilapidated condition, and could not be securely fastened on the inside. The men may have drawn it shut, so as to conceal their light as much as possible, but found no occasion to spend any precious time in trying to mend the broken blind.

As he continued to draw this obstruction back, Hugh began to see light within. He knew how this came, remembering that the door between the two rooms had been partly open.

Gluing his eye to the cracked glass, he tried to discover evidences of the stolen child's presence. There was some sort of bundle on the floor in one corner, and, while he could not just make it out in the dim light, he found reason to believe this must be little Reuben, still fast asleep.

The next thing on the scouts' program consisted of forcing the window and gaining an entrance. Hugh made a little test, and found that he could move the sash, although only with an effort.

Ralph came to his assistance, having his hunting knife in hand, the point of which he inserted under the obstinate sash. This proved to be the right trick, and things were moving splendidly when there came an unexpected interruption.

One of the scouts had the misfortune to sneeze violently; and, alarmed by the sound,

the men inside could be heard making wildly for the door, evidently with the intention of effecting their escape from what might turn out to a be a sudden trap!

CHAPTER XIII.

WELL WORTH WHILE.

"Get around to the door, everybody; they're trying to escape!" shouted Hugh, as he whirled away from the window that had been engaging his attention.

Ralph was alongside as he turned the corner of the old smithy. The other scouts had hardly known what to do, although several of the most active seemed to be in motion, headed for the exit of the old house. These were Alec and Bud and big Tom Sherwood, and the trio presented quite a formidable phalanx. They turned the corner just in time to cut off the flight of the last of the abductors, who had tripped and fallen inside the room, thus delaying his departure for a few seconds.

The other pair could be heard pounding off in rapid order, thoroughly frightened, for they had heard the cries that were coming from the boys, and of course imagined that the sheriff's posse had arrived on their heels.

There was enough light escaping from the open door for the third rascal to get a glimpse of khaki uniforms on the flitting figures that formed a cordon across his path. No doubt he believed on the spur of the moment that the militia must have been sent to the scene of the late riot to keep the peace, and that one of their first efforts had been to run himself and his fellow kidnappers down.

The boys assailed him without hesitation. As scouts they had long ago learned the great value of assuming the offensive, if it ever became necessary to do any fighting, which is not often supposed to be the case.

When Hugh and Ralph and the rest of the troop came hurrying around the corner they saw a struggling mass which no one could fully make out in the darkness.

"Throw your light on them, Ralph!" ordered the scout master instantly.

As soon as this was done they could see that their three comrades were hanging on desperately to the man, who seemed to be doing everything in his power to hurl them aside, though without avail.

Alec had seized hold of one arm, while Bud

hung to the other, and Tom Sherwood managed to get his arms twined around the fellow's thick neck, so that he was beginning to exercise quite some pressure. At least the man looked fiery red, as if his breathing had become difficult.

"Pile on, and throw him down, boys!" Hugh called out, and willingly as many of the others obeyed as could manage to get a grip on the object of their attention.

By sheer weight of numbers the fellow was borne to the earth and rolled over on his face. Then his hands were drawn behind his back, and Billy Worth, producing a stout cord, lashed them together. After that he was unable to make any more trouble, or even try and effect his escape, for no one can run with any degree of swiftness when his arms are drawn tightly behind him.

"Let him get up, and keep him held tight," said Hugh. "Come with me, Ralph, and fetch your light along. Nurse Jones, you're in this, too."

They hurried into the house and quickly reached the second room. Before Hugh or Ralph could reach the object on the floor,

Nurse Jones had darted forward and was bending over it. As she arose, they saw that she was holding the limp figure of little Reuben in her arms.

"What ails him?" asked Ralph in trembling tones, as he saw that despite all the noise and confusion the child did not appear to pay any attention.

"They've given him some narcotic, for I can get the scent of it," replied Nurse Jones. "It was done to keep him quiet while they were carrying him out of the office, for they must have been afraid of the sheriff and his men. But the effect is wearing away fast now. He begins to stir, and—there, you can see, his eyelids are quivering. He will wake up immediately."

Hardly had she spoken than the eyes of the child were seen to open. He stared up into the face of Nurse Jones as though bewildered. She held him tightly to her breast, and bending down pressed affectionate kisses on his cheeks.

There must have been something responsive about her action that aroused his childish

confidence, for almost immediately his little arms were around her neck.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ralph Kenyon, quite overcome by the sight, and feeling that he must give voice to his excitement, or act like a baby and cry.

"Let's go outside with him, for the rest of the boys will want to have a share in the victory!" suggested Hugh, always thinking of others.

Loud were the cheers that arose when they joined the rest of the troop. The dejected prisoner must have realized more than ever the bitterness of the moment, as he saw those gallant boys swinging their hats wildly above their heads, and giving vent to their feelings in rousing shouts.

So they once more turned their faces back over the old trail. Hugh remembered that Mr. Campertown was suffering dreadfully, and he wanted to have Nurse Jones put the rescued child in his grandfather's arms, because, somehow, that seemed a fitting end to the program according to Hugh's mind.

While there was little reason to anticipate any sort of attack from the other pair of

alarmed plotters, still the scouts were not meaning to be taken off their guard.

They formed a solid phalanx around Hugh, who was taking his turn at carrying the child, and kept those handy clubs ready for instant use. It turned out that there was no necessity for this arrangement, since in the end they arrived at the works without having met with the slightest hindrance.

There were lights within the big office, and, having placed little Reuben in the arms of Nurse Jones, Hugh led the laughing and chattering lot of scouts within. The sheriff and Mr. Campertown had evidently been unable to sleep, and must have been trying to lay some new plan of campaign at the time the bustle at the door announced the arrival of the boys.

Straight up to the millionaire walked Nurse Jones, holding little Reuben, while into the room after her thronged the entire pack of scouts, every fellow wild to witness what was scheduled to take place.

Of course the first thing Mr. Campertown did was to clutch the boy and squeeze him in his arms. But almost immediately afterward he was seen to be staring in the pretty and

flushed face of Nurse Jones. In that wonderful moment something like the amazing truth must have rushed into his mind, which would account for what he started to say in a trembling voice:

"They told me your name was Nurse Jones, child, but surely you have the eyes and features of my first born, Allan. You are, you must be, a Campertown!"

Nurse Jones nodded her head in the affirmative.

"My name is Norma, the same as my father's mother," she told him.

Mr. Campertown was as white as a sheet, as some of the boys expressed it afterward, but his eyes were fastened eagerly upon the flushed face of this granddaughter whom he had never known.

"And it is from your hands I have received my little darling Reuben," he almost groaned, as though he felt terribly humbled and contrite. "It must be intended for a punishment on my head for my cruelty to your father and mother in the long ago. Tell me, are you alone in the world, or do either or both of them yet live?"

"My father is still living, sir, though in very poor health, and in need. He has always said that it was through no fault of his the estrangement came about, and in all these years he would not hear of my ever trying to see you or communicate with you. He is firmly convinced that if ever this unhappy trouble was to be bridged over, the initial step must come from his father. He has the Campertown stubbornness, sir, which will stay with him to the end."

"And it *will* come from me!" declared the millionaire firmly. "I have repented of my folly long, long ago, but never knew what had become of poor Allan. To-morrow, my dear granddaughter, you shall take me to him, and we must be reconciled. I am an old man now, and with but few years more to live. I hope to make up in part for what you and my son have suffered."

Then he turned to Hugh and shook him by the hand. Indeed he insisted on doing the same with each and every one of the scouts.

"I will see you in the morning, my gallant boys," he said, as they prepared to withdraw. "Depend on it, I have not forgotten that I

made you a promise if you succeeded in restoring my darling to my arms. I can give a pretty good guess what it is you mean to ask of me, and I am more than ready to grant it in full."

It was a happy group of scouts who wended their way back to the camp, where the whole story of their latest achievement had to be retold to Harold and Monkey Stallings, whom they found sitting up and waiting for them.

Indeed, they had reason to feel satisfied with what they had accomplished while on this their first outing of the summer. Not only had they been instrumental in instituting a scout field hospital, and taking care of the victims of the conflict between the strikers and the armed guards of the cement plant; but now they were apparently destined to be chiefly instrumental in bringing an era of industrial peace to that disturbed section.

They could certainly go back to the home town when their camping trip was over with the pleasing knowledge that a good fortune had allowed them to be of tremendous service to their fellow men; and that is the cardinal principle actuating the ambition of every true scout.

There promised to be very little sleep that night in the scouts' camp. Everybody was more or less excited after the strange happenings that had so lately taken place.

Questions without number were showered on those fortunate enough to have taken part in the adventures connected with the riot at the cement works, and the coming of the Red Cross ambulance.

To Harold the whole thing was a revelation indeed, and he felt that it had been a privilege to be connected with the scouts whose assistance had turned out to be so appreciated.

Monkey Stallings was almost inconsolable because he had not been able to join the group that went out to lend a helping hand.

"Now all of you are slated for the bronze medal that I've always hoped to wear some of these fine days," he complained, "and it leaves me out in the cold."

Of course the only consolation they could offer him was that his time was apt to come later on. Monkey Stallings was perhaps the only unhappy chap sitting alongside that cheery campfire, for the rest felt elated over their recent good luck, and it was only with consid-

erable effort that Hugh managed to chase them off to their blankets.

All were up early in the morning, for the day promised to be a lively one with them.

Hugh and several of his chums meant to go over to the works, and have a plain talk with Mr. Campertown. While his heart was feeling soft over the wonderful revelations of the preceding night, Hugh believed was the time to secure favors for the strikers.

Besides, the manufacturer had as good as half promised that he was ready to hear all Hugh had to say; and the hearty squeeze which he had given the boy's hand told the latter that the land was fallow, and ready for the plow.

Of course they had the usual rollicking time in preparing breakfast for the crowd. There had come over a bountiful amount of stores with the compliments of Mr. Campertown. This was pretty good evidence that he did not mean to keep those guards on duty any longer, feeding them inside the works. At least Hugh looked at it that way, and Arthur seemed of the same opinion.

"It's all going to come out the finest anybody could ever dream of," the latter declared, as

a party of them talked it over shortly after breakfast was done.

"Just to think of Nurse Jones turning out to be his grandchild after all; and she the finest young woman we've met this long time," remarked Billy Worth.

"I expect I know a party who agrees with you there, Billy," chuckled Alec; "and that's the young Red Cross surgeon. I could see how Dr. Richter's eyes were fastened on Nurse Jones as if he could nearly eat her."

"Well, that's none of our affair," replied Billy; "and she looks sweet enough to eat, if you'll take it from me."

When Hugh got ready to go over to the works under the belief that Mr. Campertown could be seen, he selected just Billy, Alec and Arthur to accompany him.

Seeing some of the rest look deeply disappointed, the patrol leader felt that he ought to explain.

"Of course I'd like to ask you all to go with me, boys," he said, "but the office is small; and besides, Mr. Campertown mightn't like to see a crowd. You know this is a delicate subject we're meaning to talk over with him, and his

private business in the bargain. But we'll promise to tell you everything. And then again, Nurse Jones has promised to take dinner with us to-day, so you want to tidy up the camp, and lay out a menu that'll do us credit."

So Hugh and the other three went off. They saw that everything seemed to be very quiet over in the foreign settlement.

"I guess the padrone has brought them to their senses," said Billy; "and it's a lucky thing, too, because they're going to win the strike. The very thing that seemed to be a calamity for the poor fellows has proved the stepping-stone for a big advance."

"Better still," added Hugh, "there's a new Mr. Campertown now at the head of the cement works. By that I mean he's seen a light, and guided by the love of his granddaughter never again will he be the stern employer he's been in the past."

"It's a grand good thing all around," said Alec, "and for one I'm glad to have had even a small part in helping things get where they are right now."

At the works things seemed to be going on,

but to the delight of the scouts they saw men working on the stockade.

"Why, what do you think, they're knocking the whole thing flat!" exclaimed Billy, as if the sight astonished him.

As for Hugh, he felt that this was a sure sign peace was going to reign in those works from that hour on. Contented workmen would have no cause for grievance against a just and generous employer; and guards armed with deadly Winchesters would never again be known in the Campertown establishment.

They found the gentleman seated in his little office. He was looking a hundred per cent. better than when they last saw him, and even smiled genially as he shook each one of the four boys by the hand.

"I know of course just what you want to see me for this morning, boys," he told them, "and in the start I mean to tell you that I've seen a great light. This bloody business would never have occurred if I had been present; but all the same I'm partly responsible for the trouble, because I refused to arbitrate with my old hands, or investigate their plea that they were nearly starving on the new wage plan. And

I've sent for the padrone to make an agreement with him restoring wages to the point they were before the strike."

Enthusiastic Billy jumped up and gave a hurrah before he remembered where he was. Then he dropped back in his seat looking confused. But Mr. Campertown only laughed and patted him on the shoulder.

"I want to say right here," he remarked seriously, "that I consider the coming of you scouts the finest thing that could have happened. Not only did you prove yourselves made of the right stuff by taking care of those poor sufferers, and winning golden opinions from the surgeon, Dr. Richter, for whom I already have a high regard; but you also did me two of the greatest favors possible. You saved my little grandson, who is the apple of my eye, and also brought about a reunion between Norma, Allan and myself. I shall probably never be able to thank you enough for doing all these fine things."

There were actually tears in his eyes, too, when he was going around and again squeezing the hand of each and every scout.

Just then the old padrone came in, and there

was a piteous look of entreaty on his face that made the boys feel more satisfied than ever with what they had done.

No sooner had Mr. Campertown informed the padrone what he meant to do than the old man fell on his knees, and seizing the gentleman's hand covered it with kisses, as he called down the blessings of Heaven on his head.

None of them could doubt after that his sincerity, or that he had the interests of his people deeply bedded in his heart when he tried to pilot them along paths of peace.

Of course after that the sheriff and his posse had nothing further to do. Before he left the scene, however, the peace officer made it a point to visit the camp of the scouts and tell them what a high opinion he had come to have of the movement with which they were affiliated. Up to that time he had rather opposed it, but from that day when he had had his eyes opened, it had appealed to him more and more strongly.

"I have some boys who will be only too glad to start a troop in their neighborhood," he said at parting, "and so you see how far-reaching your influence for good can go. Keep up

the work, lads, and the next generation of Americans will be the finest this glorious country of ours has ever produced."

Nurse Jones came over, too, and had dinner with the scouts. She thanked them with tears in her pretty eyes for all they had done.

"We are just starting for the city, Grandfather Campertown, Reuben and I," were her parting words, "and the future looks very bright for us all. My poor father, too, can now be able to enjoy something of life, since it is money he needs most of all in order to restore his health. And we will never, never forget you, Reuben and I."

She even pinned her Red Cross badge on Hugh's sleeve, for him to keep as a reminder of these strenuous times when he and his comrades assisted the hospital corps in their duties in caring for the wounded strikers.

During the rest of their stay in camp the boys saw more or less of Dr. Richter, and grew to like him very much. When, in time, they set their faces toward the far-distant home-town, they carried a new fund of experiences and memories along with them that

would doubtless add to the general esteem in which Oakvale Troop was now held by the people among whom they dwelt.

That their activities in the way of usefulness had not yet reached a limit may be understood from the title of the volume that follows this; and if you care to continue the many pleasant friendships formed in these pages, you can do so by procuring "The Boy Scouts as County Fair Guides."

THE END.

Boy Scouts with the Red Cross
Shaler